

# Attractions

MAGAZINE

Spring 2017 • Volume 10, Issue 2 • \$5.99

**Ride 'The Tonight Show' at Universal Orlando**

**RACE THROUGH  
NEW YORK**  
STARRING **JIMMY FALLON**



**Theme Park VR Innovations**

**Ninjabo World Comes  
to Legoland Florida**

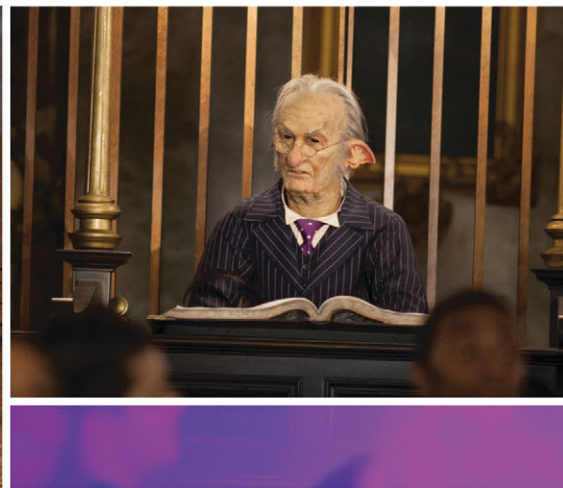
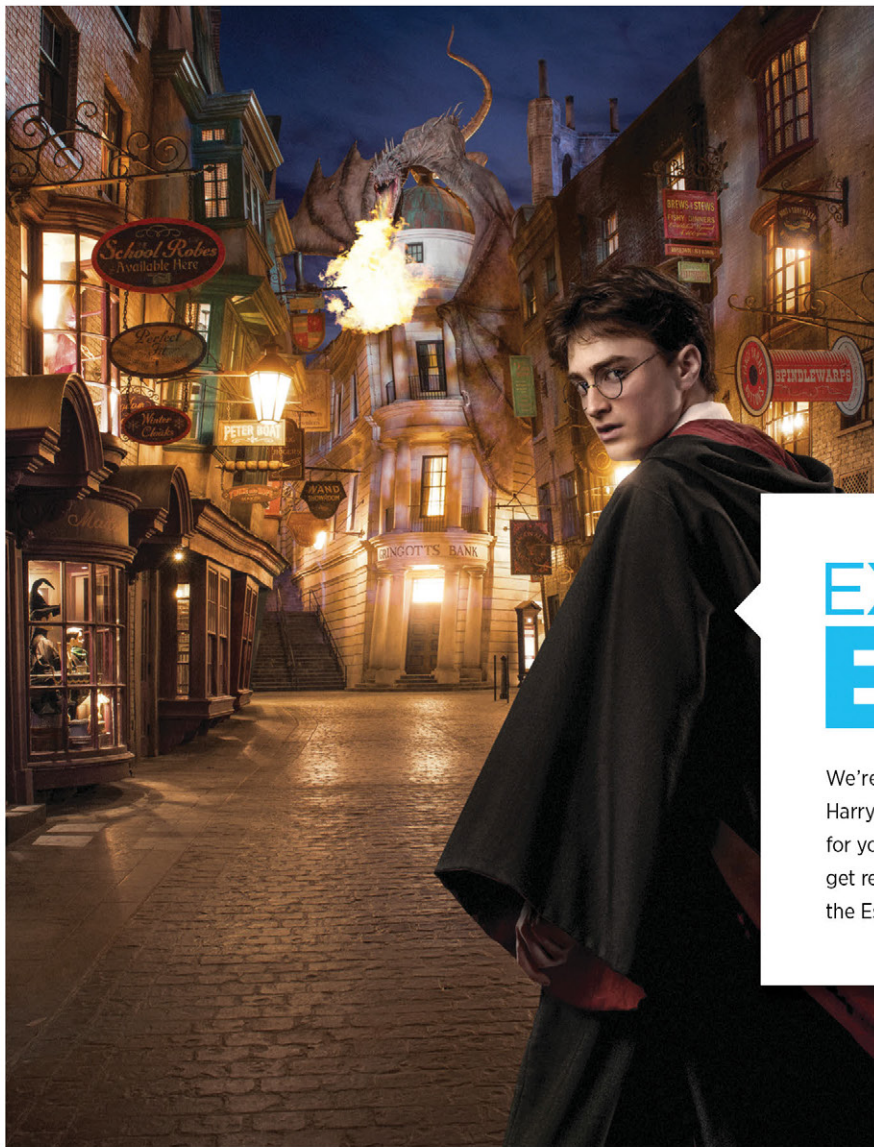
**Updates, Rumors, Cartoons & More!**

**Top 10 Pizza Places  
at Disney World**

**Q&A: Performing  
at Disney World**

**Hidden History  
at the Disney Resorts**





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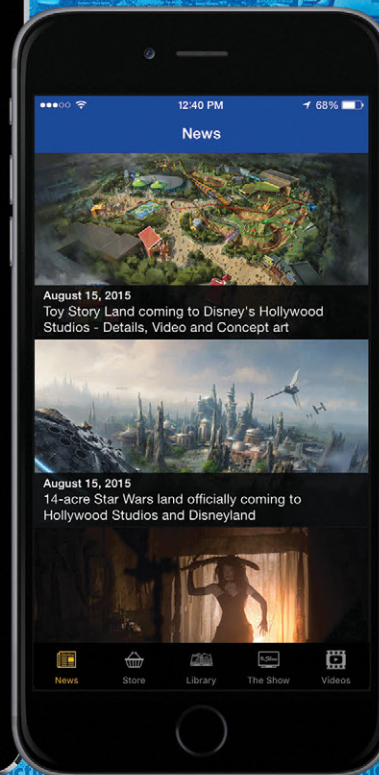
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# WHAT'S NEW ON ATTRACTIONSMAGAZINE.com

By Banks Lee

Check our website regularly for more articles, plus many videos. Stay up-to-date with all the latest theme park and attraction news through our weekly video shows, our free iPhone/iPad app and our free e-mail newsletter.

## DISNEY THEME PARK OWNERSHIPS



Recently, the Walt Disney Company announced plans to purchase 100% ownership of the Disneyland Paris resort in France. If news that the Walt Disney Company is not already the sole owner of Disneyland Paris comes as a surprise, you may be interested to know Disney doesn't completely own many of the international attractions that bear its name. Head to our website to read all the details on who owns the Disney parks around the world.

## NEW ATTRACTIONS ADVENTURES EPISODES



### SAYING GOODBYE TO WET 'N WILD



Due to time restraints, our former Attractions Adventures vlog host Matthew had to step down. Taking his place is our teen reporter from "Attractions Magazine - The Show", Quinn. Join him as he takes you throughout Asia during his recent trip overseas to theme parks in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Osaka, Tokyo and more. New episodes are posted every Friday on our website.

After over three decades, Wet 'n Wild officially closed its doors for the last time on Dec. 31, 2016, as Universal continued construction on Volcano Bay. Head to our YouTube channel to see a special tribute video to what was considered America's first water park.

## LIVE FROM THE PARKS

Follow us on Twitter @Attractions, on Snapchat at AttractionsMag, on Instagram at attractionsmagazine and our Facebook page at facebook.com/attractionsmagazine. We frequently post on-the-spot information, photos and live videos while we're inside Orlando's theme parks. You can also see our latest videos if you subscribe to our YouTube channel at youtube.com/attractionsmagazine. Be sure to click on the bell icon to be notified when we post new videos.

**We post a new show every day.**

**Sunday:** The Weekly Rewind

**Monday:** Daycation Kingdom

**Tuesday:** Photo Finds

**Wednesday:** As Dreamers Do

**Thursday:** Attractions Magazine - The Show

**Friday:** Attractions Adventures

**Saturday:** Florida E-Ticket





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on our past issues

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# FEEDBACK

Favorite Fan Photos and Stories.



It's not just for families. — George Everette



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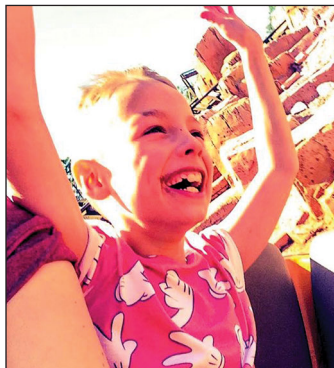
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My mum (third row, middle) didn't really want to ride, but we told her it will be fine. Haha. She loved it really. — Jack Wood



My boy on Big Thunder Mountain. So happy. — Kate Jennings



Us having an awesome time on Rockit! It's one of my favorite rides at Universal Studios Florida. — Justin T. Jolley



The big difference between the first and the second time a 5-year-old rides Mine Train! — Luciana Barranco



We were randomly picked to be Grand Marshals and ride in the vintage car that leads the Magic Kingdom parade. What an unbelievably awesome experience. — Sharon Upward



I love the look of pure joy on my youngest son's face. Things are often a challenge for him and this photo makes my heart happy. — Michelle Fracassi Spear





My Mom (third from left, front row) has been on Tower of Terror before and claims to like it. Her face makes me laugh! — Claire Leota



This was our first trip to Magic Kingdom. We were completely clueless on Buzz Lightyear, not even looking in the direction he's pointing. — Marissa Crumpton



My daughter had just turned 5, and this was her first time riding Expedition Everest (front row with my husband.) No fear! And the lady behind them, her expression is priceless! — Amy Beck D'Anthony



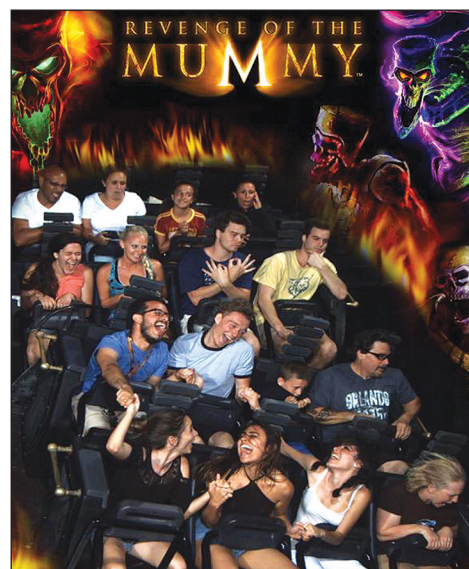
Rip Ride Rockit back row. Expression - Priceless. — René Karlend



Our favorite ride is the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster because it was my daughter's first ever coaster and the look on her face is priceless. — Mark Dennett



Men In Black was one of the kids' favorite rides because they could shoot the aliens, plus all six of us could sit together. — Michelle Burke



This time on the Mummy, we decided to hold hands and look at each other, laughing. The thought of this pose coming up had me laughing my head off for the entire ride. — Kenneth Leeming Jr.

## WRITE TO US!

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We want your letters and photos!

If you have any comments about the magazine, questions about traveling to Orlando or fun stories or photos to share, simply e-mail us at [info@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:info@attractionsmagazine.com).



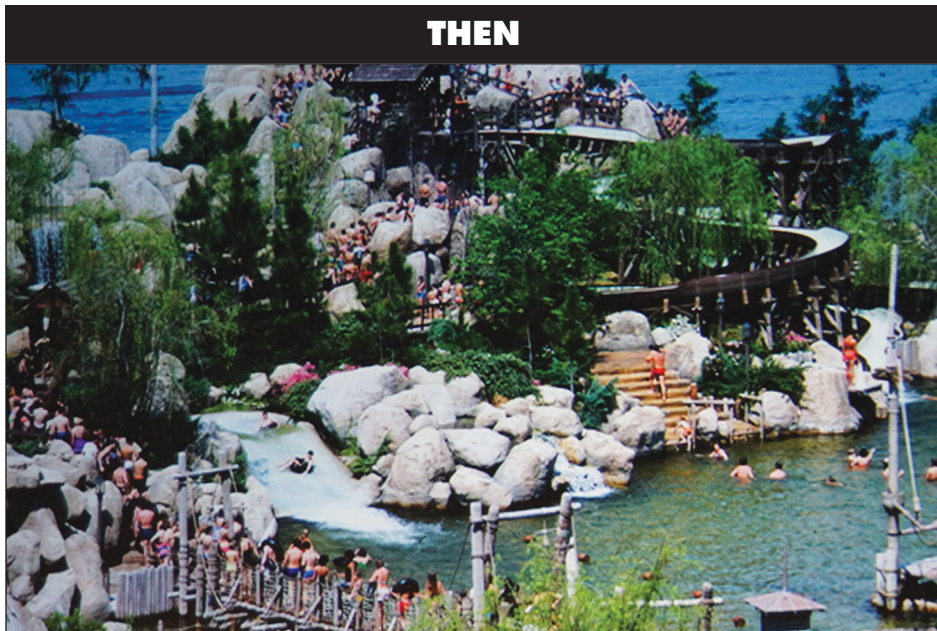


## THEN & NOW

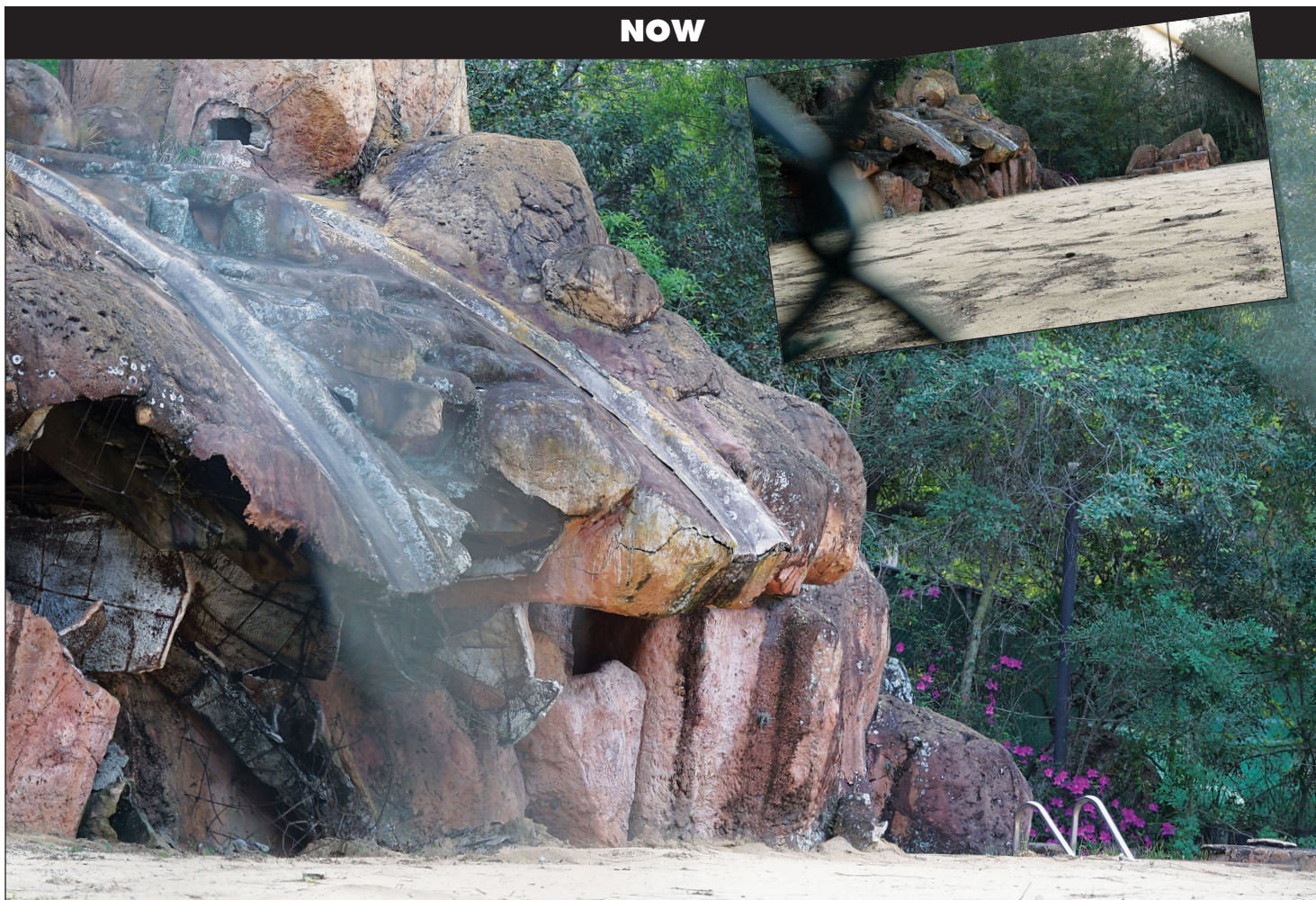
Disney's River Country, arguably the world's first water park.

**A**lthough Wet 'n Wild (which closed Jan. 1) is widely known as the world's first water park, many think that honor goes to River Country at Walt Disney World. Although it didn't have a wave pool and only one major slide, it did have several water attractions, all themed around an "old-fashioned swimmin' hole". River Country opened on June 20, 1976 next to Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground. The main "pool" that guests slid into and swam in was called Bay Cove. It was actually part of the adjacent Bay Lake. River Country closed on Sept. 1, 2001, but remnants of it can still be seen today. If you walk out past the Backyard BBQ Pavilion at the campground, you'll see the ticket booth and restrooms from River Country still standing (the restrooms are still being used). And if you peek through the fence, you can see where riders used to slide down the Imagineer-created rocks and the dirt where Bay Cove used to be. You can even see a pool ladder railing sticking out of the dirt. It's said that the success of River Country led Disney to create Typhoon Lagoon and Blizzard Beach water parks, which remain very popular today.

### THEN



### NOW



PHOTOS BY QUINN ROSECOOM



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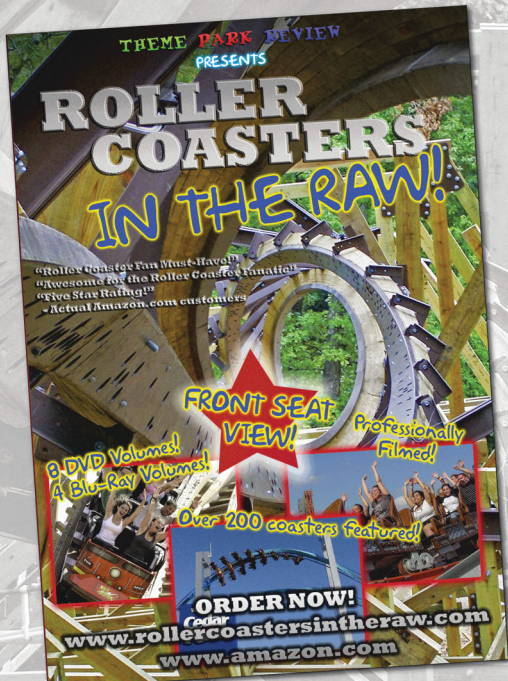
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# VACATION PLANNER

Upcoming Orlando-area attractions and events you may want to plan your vacation around.

By Banks Lee



## LEGOLAND BEACH RETREAT

**Location:** Legoland Florida Resort, former undeveloped land

**Opening Date:** April 7, 2017

Legoland Beach Retreat is a village-style vacation resort with 83 beach-themed bungalows offering 166 separate rooms, each with Lego décor inside and out. Located about a half-mile from the theme park entrance, the site also features a central swimming pool and sandy play area, a buffet restaurant, pool bar, a giant Lego-inspired lighthouse with a real rotating beacon and picturesque views of Lake Dexter.

## HAPPILY EVER AFTER

**Location:** Magic Kingdom, replaces Wishes

**Opening Date:** May 12, 2017

Featuring more lasers, lights and projections than any Magic Kingdom show before it, "Happily Ever After" hopes to take guests on an inspiring journey filled with heart and humor. Cinderella Castle itself will become part of the story, with projections bringing more than 25 Disney stories to life on and around the castle. The 18-minute spectacle will feature moments from Disney films such as "The Little Mermaid" and "Aladdin," as well as modern movies "Moana" and "Zootopia."

## UNIVERSAL'S VOLCANO BAY WATER PARK

**Location:** Universal Orlando Resort, former undeveloped land

**Opening Date:** May 25, 2017

Volcano Bay will span 30 acres and feature a variety of experiences that range from daring to serene. There will be dozens of unique attractions, including a multi-directional wave pool with sandy beaches, a peaceful winding river, twisting multi-rider raft rides, speeding body slides that drop from the top of the volcano — and more. Volcano Bay will also debut a new technology, the TapuTapu wearable, designed to make the guest experience throughout the entire park as hassle-free as possible. As part of their admission, guests will receive a TapuTapu wearable to use that allows them to wait in virtual lines and interact with elements throughout the park.

## PANDORA - THE WORLD OF AVATAR

**Location:** Disney's Animal Kingdom, former Camp Minnie-Mickey

**Opening Date:** May 27, 2017

Pandora — The World of Avatar will transport guests to a mystical world of bioluminescent rainforests, floating mountains and soaring Banshees. Guests will discover two main attractions, Avatar Flight of Passage and the Na'vi River Journey. Hungry adventurers can recharge at Satu'li Canteen, the main dining location, or Pongu Pongu, a drink kiosk. Shoppers can stock up on Na'vi cultural items, toys, science kits and more at Windtraders.

## MINE BLOWER

**Location:** Fun Spot America - Kissimmee, former kid's go-kart track

**Opening Date:** Summer 2017  
Fun Spot America's newest wooden roller coaster will feature a unique element to Florida - a 360-degree barrel roll.



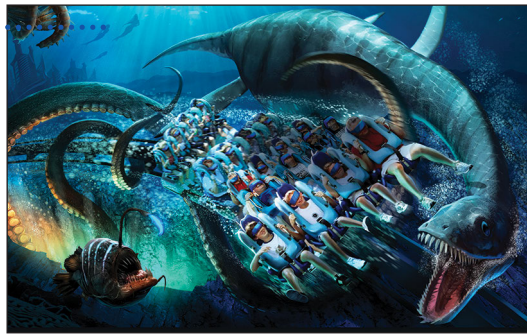


## KRAKEN VR

**Location:** SeaWorld Orlando

**Opening Date:** Summer 2017

SeaWorld will debut its first digitally-enhanced ride experience as the legendary Kraken roller coaster is transformed into a virtual reality roller coaster experience. Guests will embark on a deep sea mission alongside sea creatures inspired by extinct and legendary animals of the past, including the mighty Kraken. Guests will be able to choose whether to wear the VR goggles or not when riding.



## FAST & FURIOUS: SUPERCHARGED

**Location:** Universal Studios Florida, formerly Disaster!

**Opening Date:** 2018

Led by film stars Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson, Michelle Rodriguez and Tyrese Gibson, guests will feel like part of the "Fast family" as they embark on a new Fast & Furious adventure. They will be immersed in an underground racing world, explore the headquarters of Toretto and his team, and even get to check out some of the supercharged cars they've seen on the big screen. Then, guests will board specially-designed vehicles and take off on an adrenaline-pumping ride with their favorite stars from the films.



## STAR WARS LAND

**Location:** Disney's Hollywood Studios, former Streets of America and Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show

**Opening Date:** 2019

Star Wars-themed lands will be coming to Disneyland in California and Disney's Hollywood Studios, transporting guests to a never-before-seen planet, a remote trading port and one of the last stops before wild space. Inside these lands, guests will be able to step aboard the Millennium Falcon and actually pilot it, steering the vessel through space and firing the laser cannons. In another attraction, guests will find themselves in the middle of a tense battle between First Order Stormtroopers and Resistance fighters.



## TOY STORY LAND

**Location:** Disney's Hollywood Studios, former Backlot Tour

**Opening Date:** Unknown

This 11-acre land will transport guests into Andy's backyard. Guests will think they've been shrunk to the size of Woody and Buzz as they are surrounded by oversized toys Andy has assembled using his imagination. Using toys like building blocks, plastic buckets and shovels, Andy has designed the setting for the area, which will include two new attractions: Slinky Dog Dash family coaster and Alien Swirling Saucers.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Seven Seas Food Festival

SeaWorld Orlando

Saturdays through May 13

### International Flower & Garden Festival

Epcot

Through May 29

### Busch Gardens Food & Wine Festival

Busch Gardens Tampa

Through April 30

### Jack Hanna Weekend

SeaWorld Orlando

April 1 and 2

### Wrestlemania 33

Camping World Stadium

April 2

### Star Wars Celebration

Orange County Convention Center

April 13 to 16

### Spooky Empire Retro

Wyndham Orlando Resort

April 21 to 23

### Kidz Bop Weekend

Legoland Florida Resort

April 28 to 30

### Lego Star Wars Days

Legoland Florida Resort

Saturdays and Sundays

May 6 to 14

### MegaCon

Orange County Convention Center

May 25 to 28

All events and dates are subject to change. Please check with the proper organization before attending. Check our calendar section at [AttractionsMagazine.com](http://AttractionsMagazine.com) for up-to-date happenings in the Orlando area.

## MISS ADVENTURE FALLS

**Location:** Disney's Typhoon Lagoon Water Park, former undeveloped land

**Opening Date:** March 12, 2017

Aboard this family-style raft adventure, guests will be immersed in the story of Captain Mary Oceanear. Legend holds that this treasure hunter roamed the seven seas in search of undersea artifacts — until a rogue storm marooned her at Typhoon Lagoon. Guests gently ascend to the top of the attraction in treasure rafts, only to plunge into a whitewater adventure where they will encounter some of Mary's deep-sea treasures. When it opens, Miss Adventure Falls will be one of the longest attractions (two-minute ride) at Disney's water parks.





# NEWS IN THE QUEUE

By Quinn Roseboom

## PADDLEFISHIN' AT THE SPRINGS

LOCATION: Disney Springs



The seafood-centric restaurant, formerly known as Fulton's Crab House (and the Empress Lilly before that), has undergone an extensive transformation into "Paddlefish" with a brand new design similar to that of a modern yacht experience. Paddlefish is open for lunch and dinner in addition to offering a Sunday brunch.



## AND NOW FOR THE MAIN EVENT ...

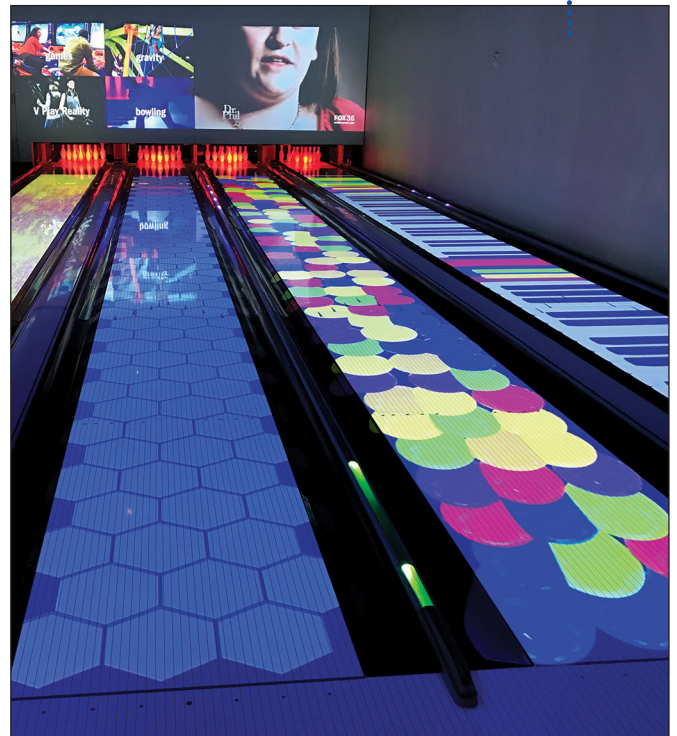
LOCATION: Pointe Orlando

## CORONADO SPRINGING UP

LOCATION: Disney's Coronado Springs Resort



Work has begun on a new 15-story tower that will bring an additional 500 rooms, suites and concierge level services to the resort. The new tower, overlooking Lago Dorado lake, will offer a rooftop dining experience with panoramic views of nighttime fireworks from nearby parks. Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort is also getting a bit of a makeover with a new waterfront dining area and retail shopping area.



Main Event Entertainment recently opened its first Florida-based location. The dining and entertainment venue features American fare and handcrafted cocktails, more than 100 virtual and interactive games, state-of-the-art bowling and V Play Virtual Reality, the first free-roam multi-player virtual reality game in the U.S.



## A PLACE TO SPOT THE STARS

LOCATION: Disney Springs

After an extensive transformation, the completely remodeled Planet Hollywood Observatory restaurant is now open, featuring menu items from celebrity chef Guy Fieri, a galaxy theme, and an all new collection of movie memorabilia.



## NBA STILL ON THE WAY

LOCATION: Disney Springs



Over two years after the interactive attraction's demise was first announced, DisneyQuest is scheduled to close on July 3 to make way for the NBA Experience. Disney describes it as a one-of-a-kind basketball-themed experience featuring hands-on activities that put guests of all ages right in the middle of NBA game action. There will be NBA video productions and numerous interactive experiences, as well as a restaurant and a retail store.

## A HAPPILY EVER AFTER FOR WISHES

LOCATION: Magic Kingdom



"Wishes" is nearing its final performance at the Magic Kingdom on May 11 to make way for "Happily Ever After", a new nighttime spectacular debuting May 12. It will feature the latest fireworks, pyrotechnics and original animation and score. And thanks to the inclusion of projection mapping technology, more Disney characters than ever before will be featured in the show, including moments from "Moana," "Brave," "Big Hero 6," "Zootopia," "The Princess & The Frog," "Aladdin" and many others.



## EVEN EARLIER MAGIC!

LOCATION: Magic Kingdom

Though the park usually doesn't officially open until 9 a.m., guests visiting the Magic Kingdom now have the chance to enjoy Main Street, U.S.A. earlier, and enjoy an all new welcome show on the Castle Forecourt Stage. A Royal Herald delivers a proclamation and welcomes a few familiar characters. With this new show, it means the end of the Welcome Show at the train station.



## GET READY FOR A BB-GR8 INTRODUCTION!

LOCATION: Disney's Hollywood Studios



The lovable Star Wars droid, BB-8, is set to start meeting guests April 14 in Star Wars Launch Bay, making his debut that night at the "Star Wars: Galactic Nights" specially-ticketed event, which will also feature "Galactic Nights Stars in Cars Motorcade", exclusive photo ops around the park, "Inside the Saga: Celebrity Chat Show" and more. After that, regular park guests will be able to meet him daily.

## NEW CHARACTERLESS BALLOON

LOCATION: Disney Springs



Characters in Flight, the tethered balloon ride, debuted a new balloon design recently. They also redesigned their storefront. The new blue design removes the Disney characters that used to adorn the old balloon.



## AND AT LAST I SEE THE LIGHT

LOCATION: Disney's Animal Kingdom

Nearly 10 months after it was originally scheduled to begin, Rivers of Light officially debuted. The show combines live performances, floating set pieces, a musical score, fountains and more in a celebration of animals and nature.



## MUGGLENET LIVE!

LOCATION: Universal Orlando Resort



Attractions Magazine is sponsoring a separately-ticketed event put on by the Harry Potter fan website, MuggleNet. Called MuggleNet Live!: Nineteen Years Later, the after-hours event in Diagon Alley will offer a panel, special guest stars from the Harry Potter movies, food, Butterbeer and more. More details and tickets can be found at [mugglenetlive.com](http://mugglenetlive.com).

## GEYSERS AND GRILLS

LOCATION: Disney's Wilderness Lodge



Located on the water's edge at the resort, the all new Geyser Point Bar & Grill was designed to capture the Pacific Northwest with cedar wood beams and natural stonework. They serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, and offer a quick-service window for on-the-go eating.

PHOTO BY DISNEY

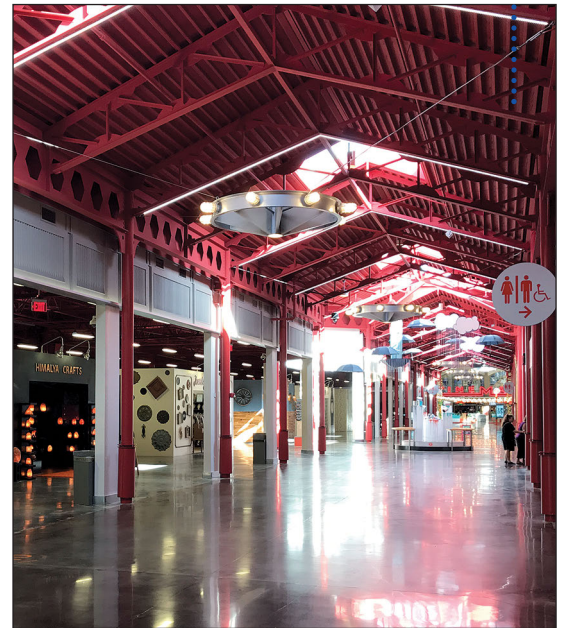


## ARTEGONE

LOCATION: International Drive

Artegon Marketplace, the International Drive "Anti-Mall" filled with everything from fine artwork to rideable zebras, closed for good in January, just over two years after its opening.

The Cinemark movie theater, Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World and a few other locations remain in operation. It's unclear what will happen to the rest of the property, but one can't help but wonder what new attraction could be on the way to such a large plot of land.



## WET, WILD AND WITHDRAWN

Location: International Drive



The Universal-owned water park, Wet 'n Wild, closed for good as we rang in the new year, and plans for the land, slides and attractions in the park have not yet been announced. Universal's newest water park, Volcano Bay, will be opening just down the street on May 25.

## RIP TILIKUM

LOCATION: SeaWorld Orlando



The SeaWorld family was saddened to announce that one of its most well-known orcas, Tilikum, passed away on Jan. 6. SeaWorld veterinarians had been treating him for a persistent and complicated bacterial lung infection. The suspected bacteria is part of a group of bacteria that is found in water and soil both in wild habitats and zoological settings. A year ago, SeaWorld announced the end of the orca breeding program, effectively making the whales at SeaWorld the last generation of orcas under human care.



## MINED BLOWN

LOCATION:  
Kissimmee

A new wooden roller coaster is coming to Fun Spot America in Kissimmee this summer. Mine Blower will be the only wooden roller coaster in the Southeast United States that will feature a 360 degree barrel roll.



## MORE AND MORE STAR WARS

LOCATION: Disney's Hollywood Studios



The Star Wars AWR Troopers (aka Imperial Death Troopers) from "Rogue One" have been added to the daily "Star Wars: A Galaxy Far, Far Away" show. Over at Star Tours: The Adventures Continue, randomized scenes have returned. Instead of each ride experience launching from the planet of Jakku, the attraction will be randomized to both start and end at different locations. New scenes from "Star Wars: Episode VIII" will be added to Star Tours in the coming year.

## D-LIVING'S FIRST RE-THEME

LOCATION: Disney Springs



Disney's home décor store only opened in late November, but the Town Center store has already undergone a major revamping. When it debuted, Disney promised its offerings would rotate seasonally, and the shop has just had its first makeover inspired by the upcoming big-screen premiere of the live-action "Beauty and the Beast" movie remake.





## PHOTO FINDS

Orlando is always filled with fun things to see and our photographers are there to capture it all.



The first-ever **Epcot International Festival of the Arts** was held each Friday through Monday from Jan. 13 to Feb. 20. The event featured concerts by Broadway performers, art seminars, live art and of course, artful food and drink. Overall, guests seemed to enjoy the event. Disney says the event will return next year.



The fourth annual **"A Celebration of Harry Potter"** took place Jan. 27 to 29 at **Universal Orlando**. As usual, the event featured celebrities, dressed-up fans, events and this year, two expo halls. It was the first time for Harry Potter celebrities **Warwick Davis, Tom Felton and Jason Isaacs** at the event. They joined **Matthew Lewis**.



**James White of the New England Patriots** celebrated his team's Super Bowl win by **"going to Disney World"** the day after the big game. Magic Kingdom guests and NFL fans alike lined the streets as White smiled and waved from a float he shared with Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse and other Disney characters. Afterwards, White spoke to media and posed for photos with Mickey and Minnie before enjoying some fun time in the theme park.





To celebrate the release of "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," the iconic **Spaceship Earth at Epcot transformed into the Death Star** from Star Wars. Actor **Mads Mikkelsen**, who plays Galen Erso in "Rogue One," also made a special appearance at this Disney Parks Blog special event. Those in attendance were also the first to see the Imperial Death Troopers in person.



**Universal Orlando** expanded their annual **Mardi Gras** celebration to every day instead of just select dates this year. It ran Feb. 4 through March 25 and included concerts, food, drinks and a parade full of beads. They also added six new **mythical creatures-themed authentic floats**.



**SeaWorld Orlando** held the first-ever **Seven Seas Food Festival** each Saturday from Feb. 11 to May 13. The event replaced the Bands, Brew & BBQ and Viva la Música events, but incorporated their concerts, and BBQ and Latin foods. Guests sampled different themed foods and drinks at booths all around the main lake at the park.



# VS. VERSUS

We put attractions head-to-head.

By Banks Lee

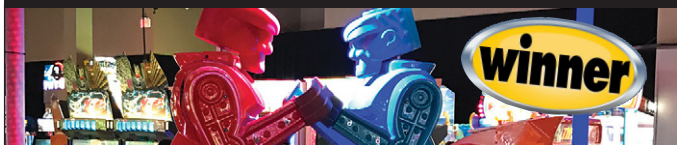
Arcades can be found all around Orlando, from the theme parks to the resorts and many places in-between. For families looking to enjoy some arcade games while also grabbing some dinner, two places on International Drive are an option, each with their own unique options.

## DAVE & BUSTER'S

# VS.

## MAIN EVENT ENTERTAINMENT

### ARCADE GAMES



Dave & Buster's features a massive selection of arcade games, ranging from classic to modern, including a life-size Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots.



Though the arcade selection isn't as big, they do feature some of the most recent cutting-edge games, plus they offer the option of paying for unlimited games per hour (not including redemption).

### FOOD



Dave & Buster's has a large menu for whatever fits your tastebuds. The Caveman Combo is a delicious choice for the carnivore in your family.

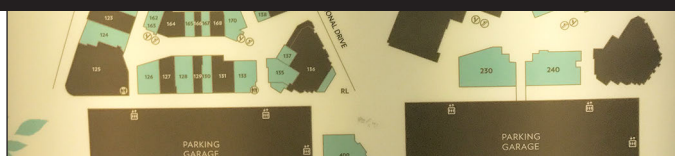


Main Event has some nice offerings available, including the loaded cheese fries.

### PARKING



Parking at Dave & Buster's is free for everyone and available both around and under the building.



Main Event is located at Pointe Orlando, which has a parking garage, but it costs to park there. While some venues offer parking validation, at the time of publication, Main Event Entertainment does not.

### REDEMPTIONS



In addition to the standard arcade prizes, Dave & Buster's features items branded to their venue like D&B hats, shirts and more.



Although it's a pretty large selection of prizes, they're the standard ones you'll find in arcades everywhere.

### MORE FUN



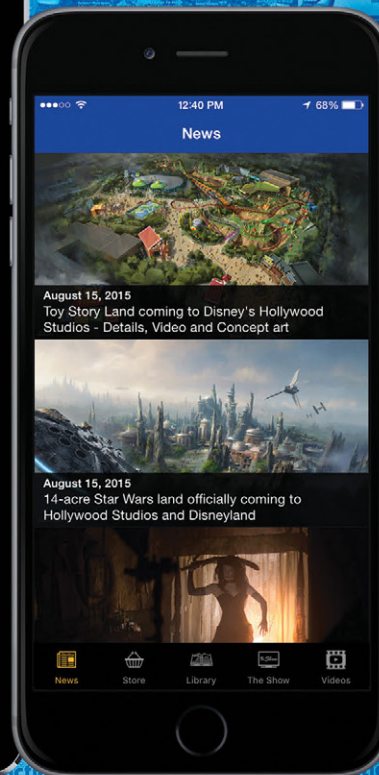
Aside from the restaurant and the arcade games, there's not much more to experience inside Dave & Buster's.



One of the best things about Main Event is there's a wide variety of entertainment offerings. Not only do they have arcade games, but also bowling, a ropes course, and the nation's first V Play Virtual Reality free-room virtual experience.



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Epcot's signature Garden Rocks Concert Series is a highlight of the annual Flower & Garden Festival, and The Orchestra, starring former members of ELO, are regulars. Band members include, from left, violinist Mik Kaminski, drummer Gordon Townsend, bass player Glen Burtnik and guitarist Parthenon Huxley.





By Susan and Simon Veness

# The Festival Beat Goes On At Epcot with The Orchestra

**T**he 'Garden Rocks' Concert Series is one of Epcot's annual Flower & Garden Festival highlights. Many of the bands are repeat visitors and have struck up a great relationship with the park and its visitors. One of the regulars is The Orchestra, starring former members of ELO (Electric Light Orchestra), who will be making their seventh visit April 21-24.

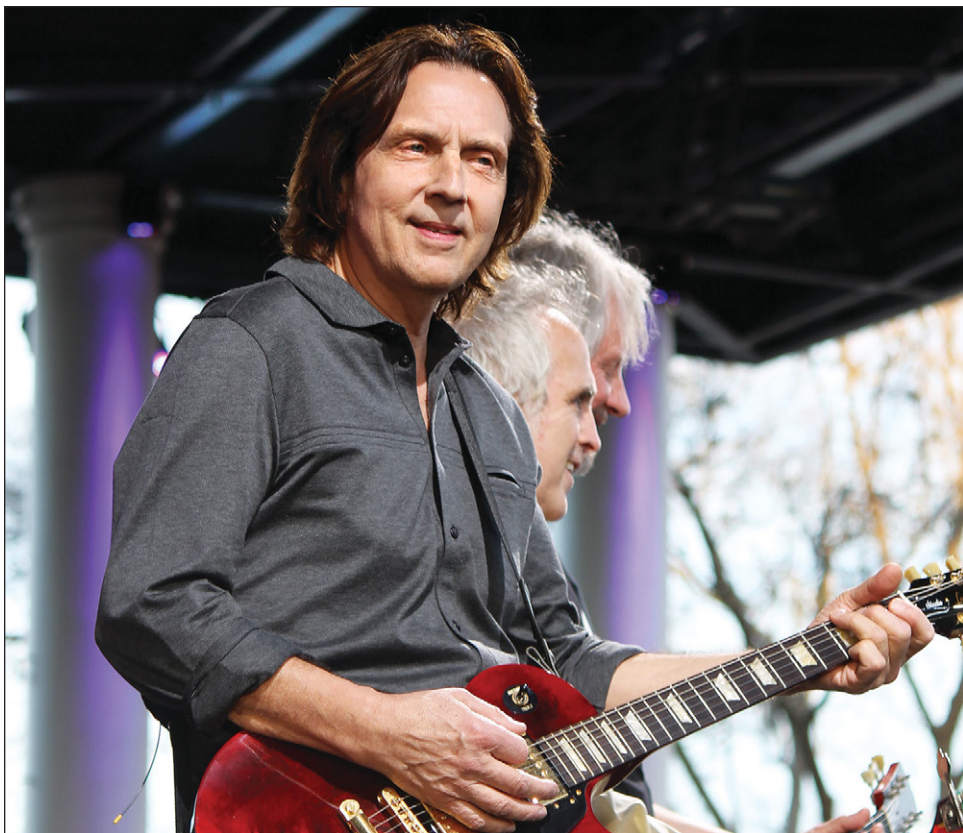
With this year's Flower & Garden Festival now underway, we spoke to the band's keyboards player and guitarist Eric Troyer to find out more about what makes playing at Epcot special, and what keeps them coming back year after year. The America Gardens Theatre only seats around 1,000 people at a time (with standing room at the back), and yet the vibe is always electric, and the fans flock in for every performance. But what's it like to be on stage for this unusual format (with three 30-minute sets each night)?

## Tell us how The Orchestra first got involved with playing at Epcot.

We actually had been on Disney's radar for quite a while and we just couldn't quite make it work, schedule-wise, but then it finally worked out six years ago. So we were prepared for the situation, for the idea of playing at a theme park, which is a bit different for most bands. And we were really looking forward to it. It is a prestige gig. It really is. We are very honored they want us there and they want us back each year. We've been told we are one of the most popular acts they bring in there and we're very happy about that.

## So this really is something bands are eager to do?

Absolutely. We always try to make



PHOTOS BY SUSAN VENESS

"Playing at the unique America Gardens Theatre makes for a wonderful atmosphere," says the versatile Eric Troyer, who plays guitar, keyboards and sings with the popular six-piece band.

room for it. There are other venues where you play in this kind of [smaller-scale] setting, and they are similar in style, but this is kind of like the crown jewel of all those things. It is a party. People are really having a good time, and it makes for a wonderful atmosphere.

## What else is different about the set-up and style of playing at the America Gardens Theatre?

The only thing that's a little weird is doing three half-hour sets. It's the only place we've ever done anything quite like that. But that works out fine too. They are in the

afternoons and Disney feeds us really well both before and after! It's a great gig and we love it. We absolutely love it.

## Does having to play in such a restricted format make it harder to put the set together?

It's definitely tricky to work out what to play, given just 30 minutes a set, but, after six years there, we've kind of worked out what seems to go over best. What we usually aim to do is build three different sets where we only repeat one or two songs (as there are certain songs people expect to hear every time). Usually there are a couple of ballads, and it builds



pretty well and we finish with a bang. We just have to do it three times! But it is certainly pretty different to the typical 90-minute set.

**Does that mean you enjoy the difference from the usual concert format?**

Yes, we are very happy with that set-up now. After getting used to that schedule of half-an-hour on, 45 minutes off, half-an-hour on, etc., it really works out well for us. We have our sets all planned out and it works well from the performance side of things.

**How would you sum up the atmosphere when the band is on stage?**

It's definitely different, but we obviously have a very welcoming audience. Seeing as it comes along with your ticket to Epcot, you walk in, sit down and everybody knows the material. You are basically playing all the hits from the ELO catalogue and we just get a great response. The people are wonderful, it's usually a warm day and the atmosphere is really great there.

**It seems the bands themselves enjoy the more informal and laid-back style at Epcot. Is that right?**

Definitely. The fact it's an afternoon gig and because it's in that relaxed atmos-

phere, it definitely makes it easy for us to relax and just have a little fun.

**What are the other characteristics of playing there?**

It's not a place where you want to jam around too much. People are in there to see you banging out some impressive stuff from the get-go. There's no warm-up; it's not an hour-and-a-half show where there's an arc that you are building to. At Epcot, you build very quickly to three different arcs. So, while it is quite relaxed in one sense, it is also quite intense, because you have to condense a whole set into 30 minutes, three times.

**Tell us about how you set up for three days of concerts at the America Gardens venue.**

Well, we usually check into a Disney hotel the day before, and, after the park closes on Thursday night, we go in, set up about nine o'clock and do our sound-check at 10:30 when there's nobody around. It's a cool time to be in Epcot. We're just playing to this completely dark night and it's really cool, if people could see it. It's a lot of fun and we love it.

**What else can you tell us about the technical side of things?**

It's just such a great place to play, acoustically, and they treat us really well

there. The crew that set things up and take care of us – the Disney crew and technicians – those guys are just top notch, the very best. They make it really easy for us to do our thing. We just walk in, do the soundcheck late Thursday night and make sure all the gear is set up, and then Friday, we're ready to go.

**After six years of playing at Epcot, what kind of memories do you have of the crowds there?**

We have so many memories, but they kind of all blend together. We've always had a really good response from the Disney crowds. A lot of times, we get a lot of the same people and we start to recognize quite a few of them – I guess they must be locals – who come and see us each time, whenever we are in town. So it seems like we have a whole cheering section who are always down front, and we're pretty psyched about that. It's great. When it's daylight, you can see almost every face in the crowd. Then, as it gets dark, usually by the last set, things take on a different atmosphere and the place is really rocking.

**You've mentioned the Disney hospitality. How well do they look after you when you're not on stage?**

They serve us some incredible meals every night from the menus they present us. Their hospitality is just the best. And then they look after us during the day, too. We bring family and go into the parks. We've always got a lot of people; everyone has kids. I haven't been on the rides for a while, though. I used to do that, but these days my favorite park is Epcot. It is a little different, and I love history and geography, so it's really cool the way it is all set up. It was so well thought out; everything Disney does, the attention to detail, it is just number one for me. The whole experience is just great, but I especially love Epcot for those reasons.

**And do you all relax in the park as well?**

Absolutely. The guys definitely like the English pub in Epcot, and we also enjoy Germany, where there's German

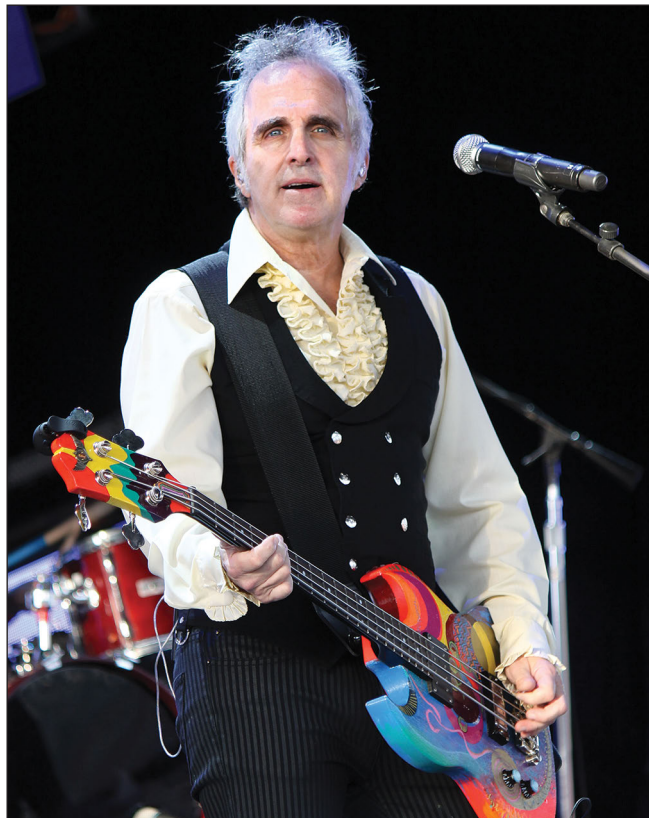


The theater's up-close-and-personal configuration ensures fans can get a close-up view of their musical heroes, like The Orchestra's guitarist Parthenon Huxley.





Eric introduces various members of the band, including drummer Gordon Townsend: "He's from Philadelphia and we think he's pretty awesome, an amazing drummer."



Bass player Glen Burtnik has a wide range of musical accomplishments, including playing for the band Styx. Eric said he's a real showman.

beer and that biergarten vibe, so we definitely have a couple of favorite spots!

#### **For those who don't know The Orchestra, can you introduce the band?**

Well, there's Mik Kaminsky, the violinist, who is definitely a comedian. He is very subtle; he comes from Yorkshire and can be a bit hard to understand, but he has this droll, subtle sense of humor that just cracks us up. He just comes out with things. Glen Burtnik on bass used to play with Styx and he is a real showman. He is a great bass player and singer. Glen is always a fireplug on stage and gets things going. Then there is Parthenon Huxley, who is an excellent guitarist and vocalist, and he's also a very successful songwriter in his own right. Gordon Townsend is an amazing drummer. He's from Philadelphia and we think he's pretty awesome. And finally, there's Lou Clark, also on keyboards, who did all the string arrangements for ELO, and with his history and what he's put into the music over the

years, it is truly amazing. His son is now playing with us as well, on cello and guitar, and we're a happy little group.

#### **What do you think made the group's success last for so long, with the original band dating back to the early 1970s?**

The longevity of the music is really all about the quality of the recordings. The songs are great and it's also got that "time of life" thing, where you might find many Baby Boomers who have the music as a kind of soundtrack to their life. But it's definitely the quality of the music, and the production that went into it, which made it classic. That's what gives it its longevity.

#### **What are the band's favorites to play?**

We especially love "Mr. Blue Sky"; that's a real favorite. "Turn to Stone" is another one. Those are always fun to play and the crowd goes a bit crazy. But there's also "Livin' Thing" and "Evil Woman"; people respond to those also, so there's a lot we can do. We have got a lot of tunes we can go to.

#### **Have you added in any of the other old standards at any stage?**

We had done "Can't Get It Out of my Head" sporadically, but it has become a fixture in the last couple of years. It is so popular and it is a great song. I used to do the vocals, but Parthenon sings that right now. We usually get a huge response from that song.

#### **After so many years together, what has been the secret of this long-lived success? (ELO dates back to 1970, ELO Part II from 1989-2000, and The Orchestra from 2000)**

There is a real sense of family with this band. Of course we bicker a little bit, but we are a band of brothers who have been through thick and thin together. We don't go in for a lot of off-stage stuff these days. A lot of the guys will have a drink and chat and hang out after gigs, but it is pretty low-key. We are not big partiers any more. It's just the rock 'n roll. We've still got that down pat.



# Skipper Ben's TOP TEN

By Ben Rebstock

## Top 10 Places for Pizza at Walt Disney World

**Y**ou know, sometimes it can be hard to find a good slice of pizza. And while Central Florida might not be known as the "Pizza Capital of the World," you might be surprised to

find out there are some outstanding options to get your pizza fix at Walt Disney World. So, here are the Top 10 places to grab a slice of pizza pie on your next visit!

# 10

### PIZZERIZZO DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

If you are new to the Disney pizza game, there's something you must learn that all Disney veterans know: all Disney standard counter-service pizza is the same. Doesn't matter which park or resort you're at, they're all made on the same conveyer belt contraption that Disney invented, using the same ingredients and made by the same standards. Some love it, some hate it. Me? I love it because of how many I ate from Pizza Planet while working at Muppet\*Vision 3D. Well, Pizza Planet is no more. The building is now run by a rat. But PizzeRizzo is still serving those standard Disney pizzas, just now with a Muppets theme instead of Buzz and Woody. If you have an urge for a Disney-style pie, PizzeRizzo is the place to go.

PHOTO BY SETH KUBERSKY



PHOTO BY QUINN ROSEBOOM



# 9

### BOARDWALK PIZZA WINDOW DISNEY'S BOARDWALK

Sometimes, fast and convenient can make up for some lost quality, which is the case with this pizza window. Think of it as that college pizza place that stays open late when maybe you've had a little too much fun that night. That's exactly what the Boardwalk Pizza Window is to those staying at the hotel, who have had a fun, long day over at Epcot and need a little something before they call it a night. The slices are greasy and cheap (at least when it comes to Disney standards), which can sometimes make a perfect pizza meal.





# 8

## PIZZAFARI DISNEY'S ANIMAL KINGDOM

Pizzafari used to only serve Disney-style pizzas, but they went through a menu change last year that introduced flatbread pizzas that have become popular across the Walt Disney World property. Pizzafari uses its exotic location at Animal Kingdom to get adventurous with its' flatbreads, which include a popular shrimp flatbread that is served for lunch and dinner. The Cheeseburger and Mediterranean Flatbreads are two other unique offerings that can only be found at this location. Pizzafari is a great option for any human looking for a hearty meal before they travel across the galaxy to Pandora.



# 7

## SPLITSVILLE DISNEY SPRINGS

Come for the bowling, stay for the pizza. It's no secret anymore that many people think Splitsville serves some of the most underrated food on the Disney property. You can add pizza to the list of items that make this place so good. There are several options to choose from on the menu, but if you want to take my personal recommendation, you must try both the BBQ Chicken and Firehouse pies. While the tangy BBQ sauce is the real winner on the first option, it's the boneless hot wings and buffalo sauce on top of the Firehouse pizza that you'll really be talking about. Just be sure to wipe your greasy fingers off before it's time to step up to the bowling lane and knock down some pins — it's proper pizza bowling etiquette.



# 6

## PINOCCHIO VILLAGE HAUS MAGIC KINGDOM

Since the menu change a few years ago, Pinocchio's has gone from a place I never ate at, to one we now visit multiple times per trip. And the reason why? The outstanding flatbreads. I'm a meat lover, so the sausage and pepperoni is my go-to option. With the wife, it's always the caprese. The balsamic vinaigrette they drizzle on top goes perfect with the mozzarella and tomatoes. I almost wish Pinocchio Village Haus had a gift shop, so they could bottle it up and sell it. (With this being Disney, I'm kinda surprised it hasn't already happened.)



PHOTOS BY THARIN WHITE





# 5

## IL MULINO NEW YORK SWAN RESORT

If you've been lucky enough to dine at the famous Il Mulino in New York, you might be surprised to know there's a second location tucked away at the Walt Disney World Swan Resort, and their famous wood-fired pizzas are just as good down in Florida as they are up in the northeast. The three cheese is to die for, and if you are going for just the pizza, you can go back and tell your friends you dined in a very upscale restaurant, and it won't drain your bank account. But again, that's "if" you just stick to the pizzas.

# 4

## BLAZE PIZZA DISNEY SPRINGS

This newcomer to Disney property has shot up my list quick, and not just because they make their pizzas in a blitz. Blaze Pizza is a really cool concept. Start with some personal-sized dough, pick out your toppings and, in less than three minutes using their original fast-fire'd concept, bam, you've got a piping hot pizza ready to enjoy. If you're not in the mood to make your own, you can choose from a number of signature dishes. But no matter what, when you come to Blaze Pizza, you better be ready to eat, because your food is going to be ready in a flash.



# 3

## CALIFORNIA GRILL DISNEY'S CONTEMPORARY RESORT

Flatbread pizzas have been added to the California Grill over the last few years, giving guests a reasonably priced option at one of Disney's most upscale restaurants on property. But don't be fooled by the price (around \$16 each); you're not trading cost for quality, as these flatbreads are delicious. On our last visit, the roasted tomato flatbread was a real winner. The wife goes for anything with goat cheese on it, and this dish did not disappoint. The California Grill continually updates their menu, so check in to see what options are available on your visit. And time your visit around the Magic Kingdom fireworks to enjoy the show!





# 2

## WOLFGANG PUCK DISNEY SPRINGS

With all of the shops and restaurants that have opened all

over Disney Springs, it's easy to forget there's a signature restaurant still over on the West Side from one of the world's most famous chefs that serves some of the best pizza you can find anywhere. If you want a little taste of the west coast, Chef Wolfgang Puck has brought his signature wood-fired California pizzas to Central Florida. Standout options include a goat cheese pizza and, my favorite, with Italian meat. (You can never have too many Italian meats on a pizza — ever!) While I recommend getting a table in the upstairs dining room to enjoy your meal, Wolfgang Puck does offer two Express eateries (one just outside the main restaurant and one in the Marketplace) where you can get a quick pizza fix while shopping.



# 1

## VIA NAPOLI EPCOT

For me, this is a no-brainer for the number one spot. Tucked away in the back of the Italy pavilion, Via Napoli offers up the best pizza at Disney World, hands down. The main attraction are the three large stone ovens where your authentic Neapolitan pizzas are cooked after being prepared in their open kitchen. Each ingredient is picked with care to bring you the truest version of pizza you would find back in Naples, Italy. Via Napoli is extremely popular, so be sure to book a reservation in advance ... and don't mistake the outdoor pizza window for the outstanding experience you will find inside. Trust me, it's not the same. If you are like me and my family, you just might find yourself eating a Via Napoli pizza multiple times per trip. It's just that good.

**DO YOU AGREE WITH BEN  
OR HAVE A SUGGESTION  
FOR A FUTURE TOP TEN?**

Let us know at  
[info@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:info@attractionsmagazine.com)



# JIMMY FALLON STARS IN A NEW YORK LAUGH-FEST ATTRACTION

By Susan and Simon Veness



**T**wister... Ride It Out is gone, but the attraction that has taken its place is also a force to be reckoned with, as Jimmy Fallon, star of “The Tonight Show”, welcomes guests to a taping of the show and ends up taking them on a thrilling adventure through New York — and beyond. And if the designers’ enthusiasm for an attraction is any indication of its future success, Universal Creative Show Producer Neil Engel has made certain Race Through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon will be a major headliner.

Engel shared the origins of Universal Orlando’s newest attraction with us the day after its soft opening. “It all started back in Hollywood,” he revealed. “Years ago, we thought about Universal

Hollywood’s tram tour, and we thought Jimmy Fallon would be a great [virtual] host for the tour.

“Guests loved it, so senior executives said to Jimmy, ‘Hey, ever think you’d like to be in a ride?’ He said ‘Are you kidding? Of course I’d want to have a ride of my own!’ So we put on our thinking caps for an experience that would be both thrilling and funny, one you can ride again and again.”

The process started with numbers. As in, how many people could go through in one hour? How many shows could the theater do in a day? How many effects could designers create and how many pixels were needed to cover a screen four stories high? “Once all that looked good,

The attraction’s clever use of technology includes a color-coded ticket. When the color on the peacock on the wall and this light on the ceiling match your ticket, it’s time to head upstairs.





Once guests reach Studio 6B for “The Tonight Show”, they discover Jimmy has turned it into a race through New York in his one-of-a-kind Tonight Rider, and the real entertainment is about to start, as the audience gets to race in a “flying theater” - and events are about to get seriously wacky, around, above and beyond New York!

we said, ‘Let’s tie Jimmy into this,’” Engel said. “We had a couple of ideas for an adventure from watching highlights of the show and we said, ‘Why not a race through New York?’ New York is fabulous on its own, but we decided the ride would have to go under, over and through the city, and into outer space.”

The premise of the attraction, which officially opens April 6, is that you’re going to a taping of “The Tonight Show” with Jimmy as your host. But, of course,

it’s not as simple as that. “All of the attraction is just like the real show,” Engel revealed. “It not only shows Jimmy’s best highlights, it also brings to life a lot of monologue jokes, plus celebrities and entertainment from the show. We’ve put live entertainers into the experience. It’s a brand new concept: we get you out of line and into the show.”

Another departure is that the attraction is designed to be a “real-life” experience, rather than a “making of” experience. “For example, the ride Disaster! was about making a film,” Engel said. “This time we wanted to tell a story; we wanted to go places and immerse guests in a crazy environment. Race Through New York is about actually being part

of a television show taping as opposed to how it’s taped.”

Perhaps the most innovative part of the new attraction is its queuing system. Engel explained, “Theme parks have been wrapping people in lines for years, so we had to come up with ways to create enjoyment of more than just the attraction.

“We don’t have the typical queues everyone is familiar with. We wanted to bring the experience of regular people coming in through the 30 Rockefeller Center building [in Manhattan], so we decorated the soundstage itself to look like 30 Rock.” It’s a convincing replica, perfectly in keeping with the existing New York area of the park.





The stage in the lounge on the second floor is where you'll see the Ragtime Gals perform, as well as be introduced to Hashtag the Panda, as long as he's not already out greeting guests when you arrive. You'll soon see why Hashtag isn't like most theme park characters.

Superb use of technology starts with a smartphone app that allows guests to choose when they want to ride, and Universal saves a return time for them. Those who don't have a cellphone or who can't use mobile roaming can still get a reservation by visiting a kiosk outside the building, which will give them a paper ticket with a return time.

In a tremendous step forward as far as queuing is concerned, the attraction then utilizes a virtual queue, which allows guests to wait for their ride in relative comfort once their return time arrives. There are no traditional lines, and guests are free to roam the lobby at will.

Engel explained how it works: "Go in at your scheduled time and a page hands you

a ticket that's shaped like the NBC Peacock, and all the feathers are one color. When you see the peacock light fixtures on the wall turn the color of your ticket, it's your turn to go into the studio. Until then, you can look at great history instead of standing in a boring line."

The experience begins in a long hallway lined with NBC logos, from its earliest radio days to the present, and proceeds into 30 Rock's lobby. "Inside is just like the building in New York, but with show-cases dedicated to the six hosts who did *The Tonight Show*," Engel said.

"There are all kinds of neat artifacts [from each host's tenure], and you can watch clips of them on TVs that represent the kind of television in use when each was the host. For example, Jay Leno's window has a gargantuan CRT (cathode ray tube) television. Jimmy's has a flat screen high definition TV. We also have actual suits that each host wore during their time with the show. It's an interesting gallery-like experience."



The lobby is also the location of the podium from which you are handed a color-coded plastic card that indicates your entry-time color. As you're looking at memorabilia, you will hear the NBC chime over the speakers and the peacock-shaped light fixtures on the wall will change to one of the colors of the NBC peacock's feathers. When the lights match their card color, guests proceed up to a second floor lounge.

The lounge is the more interactive area, with several small versions of Jimmy's desk, and groupings of sofas. Engel described its interactive elements: "The top of each desk features a touch-screen monitor with games Jimmy is in, including a card matching game. You can tweet a hashtag of the week, and you can send Jimmy-style thank you notes home to your friends, which come to them with the logo of the attraction and a 'Hello' from Universal Studios Orlando."

Music is a big part of "The Tonight Show", and Jimmy's house band, The Roots, scored the attraction. "We also have the Ragtime Gals performing in the upstairs lounge. They combine the harmony of barbershop with the music of today," Engel said.

Five men make up the Ragtime Gals, and their barbershop-quartet-style tunes include a history of rap music and a lip sync battle, the highlight of which is a hilarious rendition of Celine Dion singing the theme song from "Titanic". Hashtag the Panda, another icon from Fallon's show, comes out to dance, and we are reliably told he sometimes "passes out from the heat inside his costume" (to great effect when it happens while he's posing for pictures).

When the second floor lobby lights match the guests' card, it's time to check in with the NBC page at the Studio Entrance. "You can stay in the lounge for



The exterior of the show building is a recreation of the famous NBC headquarters, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, in New York, complete with authentic marquee entrance and full Art Deco interior detail and décor.



That genuine Tonight Show touch extends to the live entertainment, with Universal presenting their own version of the talented Ragtime Gals a capella group to keep visitors amused in the lounge.





The lobby includes detailed exhibits for all six hosts of “The Tonight Show”, dating back to Steve Allen in 1954. Here’s the display for Johnny Carson, who hosted the show for 30 years before retiring in 1992 as a genuine NBC legend. The TV sets date to the period of the show too.

as long as you like,” Engel assured us, “or you can go with the page, pick up a set of racing goggles, and head into Studio 6B’s control room, where Jimmy is on screen talking to you during a commercial break. He reveals the safety precautions, then he says, “Okay, ready to race?” Automatic doors admit everyone into the studio, where Jimmy is on a vehicle called the Tonight Rider.

The theater features six rows, seating 12 people in each row, on a platform that moves in symphony with the visuals (buckle up!), all brought to life on a four-story wrap-around screen. Jimmy joins

guests for a race through Times Square, into New York’s subway (watch out for the oncoming train), into the East River, on top of the Empire State Building (did we mention the Tonight Rider can fly?) and even into outer space. Special goggles make the 3D elements pop, and the audience feels each bump and turn as they race Jimmy to the next checkpoint.

Engel hinted, “You’re racing Jimmy neck and neck back to the studio. I won’t tell you who wins, but let’s just

say he is gracious at the end, and even asks you to race again.”

Riders feel the splash when they enter the river and smell pizza at one point, but the action is incredibly fast paced, so guests need an eagle eye to catch some of the many visual gags. Keep an eye out for Hashtag the Panda, the “Ew!” girl, the Ragtime Gals and more. No opportunity is missed when it comes to making full 3D use of things flying at you.

Visitors who aren’t familiar with



Jimmy's show will still be able to follow what's happening, though some of the in-jokes may go over their heads. Engel shared a guest's experience with us: "The other day I was talking to someone in our test audience who didn't know 'The Tonight Show', but said, 'It's just so wacky and fun and full of music and atmosphere; I had a great time.'

"I hope we're playing to an audience that knows Jimmy well, but we can also introduce him to those who don't know him, and the ride is so exciting that they may decide to check out his show. Jimmy is such a wild guy, you can't come out of the attraction without a smile."

The usual thrill-ride warnings are in place — as Jimmy brilliantly points out in a way only he could pull off — but it's up to guests to decide if they're fit to ride. There are test seats at the front door for those who want to be certain they'll fit comfortably, and the NBC pages at the attraction are trained to look for physical issues. Engel told us, "We tell guests what kind of attraction it is, but let them tell us if they're comfortable, and there is a lounge where guests can see part of the show if they don't ride."

Wheelchair users have the option of transferring or staying in their chair using a section of the theater that can lock wheelchairs onto the ride vehicle. Expectant mothers are urged not to ride, and there is a height requirement of 40 inches, but a big bonus here for kids who don't make height is that they get a certificate, so when they come back and they're tall enough, they can go straight in without waiting. Until then, non-riders can wait in the Family Room.

We asked Engel for a final thought, and he shared a funny Jimmy moment. "He was here three months ago with his family and we wanted to take him inside, so we put a hardhat on him, took him



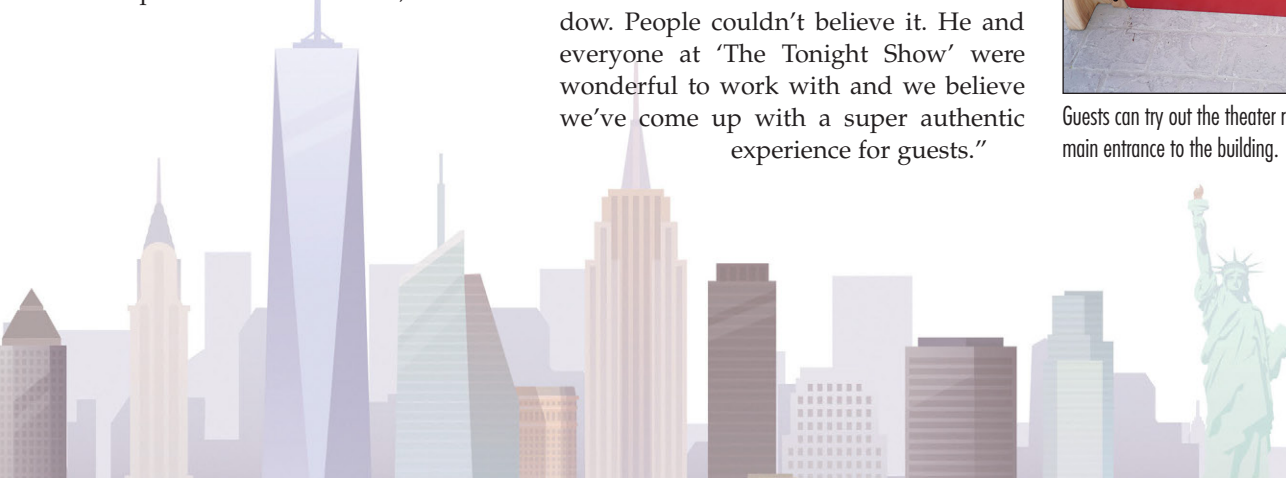
The interactive desks in the lounge allow you to look at video clips of the show, send "Thank You Notes" or play games. There are also USB ports and outlets to charge your devices.

through, and went on the ride. When it stopped, he said, 'This is the most fun thing I've ever been on!' He was jumping up and down and we said, 'There's more.'

"We took him to a VIP lounge upstairs that looks down on the concert plaza below, and as he was walking through the suite, he opened the windows and everyone in the plaza saw him. They were all waving at him and he was shouting, 'I just love the ride. It's incredible!' The building wasn't finished; there were trucks and scaffolds everywhere, and there he was with his head out the window. People couldn't believe it. He and everyone at 'The Tonight Show' were wonderful to work with and we believe we've come up with a super authentic experience for guests."



Guests can try out the theater ride seats just to the left of the main entrance to the building.







# Authentic Antiques of the Walt Disney World Resorts


By Jim Korkis

Walt Disney World is such an overwhelming experience that it's easy to overlook that its over two dozen resorts feature a fascinating showcase of intriguing hidden treasures for guests to enjoy.

The 1969 Walt Disney World publicity release stated: "The hotel 'theme resorts' – so called because each is being based upon a single theme that represents a culture or architectural style around the world – will offer far more than simply convenience of location to the new Magic Kingdom and its attractions.

"In design motif, food specialties, recreation activities, convention facilities and even the type of entertainment to be presented, these major hotels will complement each other and the attractions of the theme park."

The Disney resorts were designed with the same attention to detail and storytelling that made the Magic Kingdom such a unique vacation destination. While all of the Walt Disney World resorts have some amazing secrets often bypassed by guests, some of them have actual authentic antiques with very interesting histories.



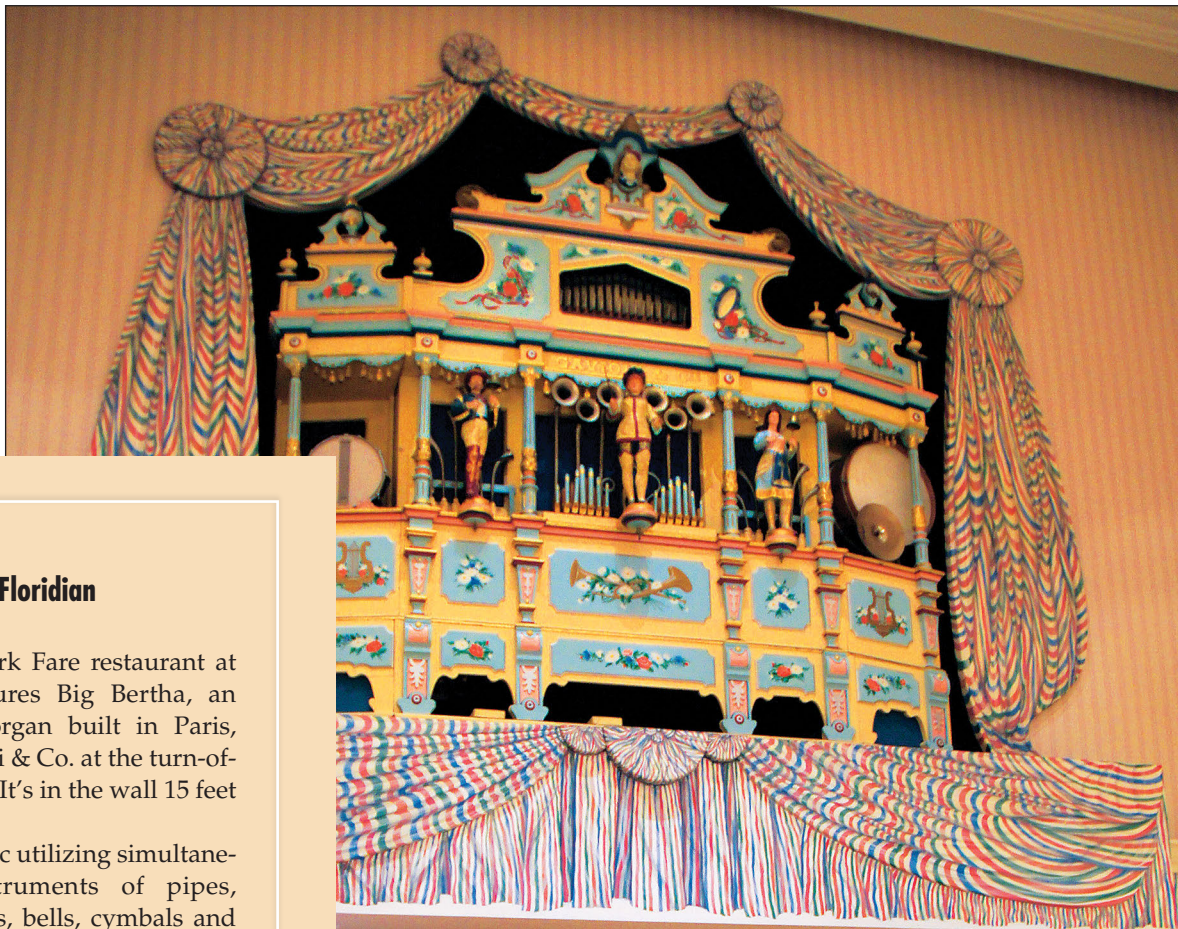


**BIG BERTHA:  
Disney's Grand Floridian  
Resort and Spa**

The 1900 Park Fare restaurant at the resort features Big Bertha, an antique band organ built in Paris, France by Gavoli & Co. at the turn-of-the-last century. It's in the wall 15 feet above guests.

It plays music utilizing simultaneously the instruments of pipes, drums, castanets, bells, cymbals and xylophone, played originally by paper piano-roll "books". It has been there since the resort opened June 28, 1988.

The highly elaborate organ was used from 1909 to 1955 in Ramona Park, an amusement park in Grand Rapids, Mich. known as the "Amusement Mecca of Western Michigan". It had been hidden in storage for decades before being located by the Imagineers and moved to Walt Disney World.







## **MINIATURE CAROUSEL: Disney's BoardWalk Inn**

In the lobby entrance is a miniature carousel created by one of the acknowledged masters of carousel building. Marcus Charles Illions (1871-1949) was a master carver, particularly famed for his work on dramatic carousel horses and the carousels that displayed them. In the 1920s, he created three grand machines dubbed the Supreme series. Disney purchased this model direct from Illions' granddaughter at auction in 1995. It had been hidden from general public view for nearly 75 years.

This salesman working sample featured 44 hand-carved four-inch-tall horses that were each unique. No two of the horses were similar. The horses even moved up and down when the machine was turned on. Illions never intended that the model would be displayed publicly. It was simply meant as a demonstration of what he could build for a client.

When the Walt Disney Company purchased it in 1995, they spent more than a year restoring the wood, mechanisms, flaking paint and other elements that were in disrepair.

The original paint colors and decorations were researched (using the still-existing full-size Illions' carousels and horses as partial reference). Brass was re-plated, gold leaf applied and miniature leather stirrup straps were attached. Even the tiny pearl-headed pins that were to represent light bulbs were replaced.

The Imagineers scaled the speed of the carousel to match that of the King Arthur Carrousel located at Disneyland Park in California. As a final playful touch, a Hidden Mickey was added to two of the horses.



## HIPPOCAMPUS ELECTROLIER: Disney's BoardWalk Inn

Hanging directly above the miniature carousel is the Hippocampus Electrolier that is a one-of-a-kind original and not a reproduction.

The classical hippocampus comes from Greek mythology and is a sea monster with a horse's forequarters and a fish's tail – quite literally a seahorse. Poseidon was not only the god of the sea, but also earthquakes and horses. He was often accompanied by hippocampi that pulled his chariot.

Electrolier was the name for a chandelier powered by electric lights, rather than gas or candle, but the term never caught on in common usage. Reportedly, it was inventor Thomas Edison who coined the term.

The Hippocampus Electrolier Chandelier at the BoardWalk Inn weighs 3,000 pounds and is finished entirely in 22-karat gold leaf, hand-cut Austrian crystal and custom-blown glass. Underneath, there is a glass globe that used to be filled with sand and a time capsule to be opened on the 50th anniversary of Walt Disney World. The globe developed a leak (or fell and cracked, depending upon who tells the story) and the sand and the time capsule were removed. But they're supposedly in safekeeping.



## KERN'S MARDI GRAS PROPS:

### Disney's Port Orleans Resort – French Quarter

Blaine Kern was known as "Mr. Mardi Gras," because when the Mardi Gras parades were offering only dim shadows of past glories in the 1950s, Kern became an innovator at creating fanciful, outlandish floats that included storybook characters whose heads turned and eyes moved.

In 1959, Kern met Walt Disney, who was visiting Mardi Gras in search of new ideas. Walt offered Kern a job as an Imagineer designing floats for Disneyland, as well as working on other projects, but Kern decided to stay in New Orleans.

Blaine Kern Artists, Inc. was responsible for the many Mardi Gras props, such as the jester figures that adorn Port Orleans - French Quarter. Some of the Mardi Gras decorative props were purchased directly from Kern's Mardi Gras warehouses in New Orleans.

These items are displayed in the Sassagoula (the Native American word for Mississippi River) Floatworks and Food Factory. The food court is called Floatworks because this is the "warehouse" where people "work" on the Mardi Gras "floats" and that is why there is a plethora of colorful authentic possibilities hanging on the walls and ceiling from past extravaganzas or from ones currently in progress.



PHOTOS BY QUINN ROSEBOM





## MOCCASINS: Disney's Wilderness Lodge

Some of the items in the lobby of the Wilderness Lodge have been re-created, like the cradleboards behind the front check-in desk and the headdresses, but some are authentic, like the display of moccasins made by the Plains Indians.

Hard rawhide soles were hand sewn to a soft buckskin upper piece. Often, they would chew on the material to make it softer and more pliable. The footwear was then ornamented with dyes, quills, beads, cloth, buttons, fur and fringe, and this work varied greatly among the different tribes.

Using no measuring tools or patterns, moccasins



were each one-of-a-kind, made to fit a specific foot of a child or adult. Intricate designs existed only in the minds of the Native Americans making them, and sometimes the design evolved as it was being worked on.

Another nearby display case showcases some actual beadwork done by Native Americans for a variety of different articles. The "seed" bead, a small round opaque Venetian glass bead, became available to the Native American cultures around 1840 through the pioneers entering their territories. Because "seed" beads were partly handmade, they were somewhat irregular.

The delicacy of the bead pattern determined the size of the bead chosen. When settlers began to crowd into the Sioux country about 1860, beadwork became a major industry for the Native Americans that was highly popular until around 1900, although examples of this beautiful craft are still produced in smaller quantities today.

Settlers sometimes dictated the style of bead pattern for the garments they were willing to purchase or trade. Later visitors to the area brought imported Czechoslovakian beads, which were somewhat darker than Venetian beads and had a slightly bluish tinge.

## CAROLWOOD PACIFIC CARS: Boulder Ridge Villas at Disney's Wilderness Lodge

From 1950 to 1953, Walt Disney transported friends and family through his elaborately landscaped backyard in Holmby Hills, Calif., on a 1/8th scale train dubbed the Carolwood Pacific Railroad.

It was named for the street where Walt lived at the time (355 North Carolwood Drive) as well as to reference the Central Pacific Railroad from the turn of the century. Walt called the engine, based on the design of the Central Pacific 1872 locomotive, the Lilly Belle after his wife, Lillian.

A cattle car, a gondola car (both hand-built by Walt Disney, with the assistance of Imagineer Roger Broggie) and a stretch of track all from the actual backyard railroad was loaned to the area by Walt's oldest daughter, Diane Disney Miller and her Disney Family Foundation. The cars feature the Carolwood Pacific "Fair Weather Route" logo.

That particular cattle car is the one that artist Salvador Dali sat on with his feet in the gondola when Imagineer Ward Kimball took the throttle to take the celebrity on a ride around Walt's backyard.

The rest of Walt's Carolwood Pacific Railroad is displayed at the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco. Another car from the train is displayed at the Disney Barn at Griffith Park in Los Angeles, Calif.



PHOTO BY QUINN ROSEBOOM



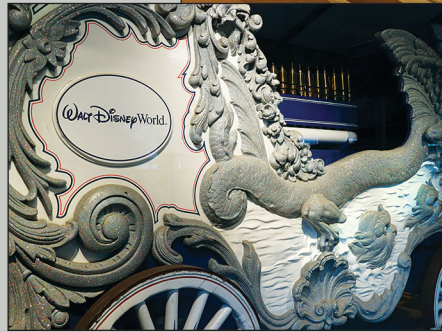
## THE DRAGON CALLIOPE: Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort

At the resort's Tri-Circle D Ranch in the Draft Horse Barn is The Dragon Calliope.

For the 1955 Mickey Mouse Club Circus parade at Disneyland, Walt Disney purchased some authentic turn-of-the-century circus wagons and very carefully restored them. In this purchase was a 1907 20-whistle steam calliope that, at a cost of \$50,000, was redesigned to resemble the others in the collection and adorned with decorative pieces from some of the other vintage circus wagons, transforming it into the Dragon Calliope.

Many of the circus wagons, as well as the calliope, appear in the Disney live-action film, "Toby Tyler, or Ten Weeks with a Circus" (1960). In 1962, Walt Disney donated the wagons (including the pieces that had been removed) to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisc. However, he kept the Dragon Calliope and it went on to appear in Disneyland parades through the park's 25th anniversary in 1980.

It was repainted silver and blue and pulled by six black Percheron horses when it was relocated to Florida for the Walt Disney World Tencennial celebration in 1981. It was seen in numerous parades at Walt Disney World until it was retired from parade duty, but still occasionally appears at public events.



PHOTOS BY QUINN ROSEBOOM

Years ago, the steam system was replaced with an electronic one, also making the rig lighter for horses to pull, and it plays three songs: "Casey Junior", "When You Wish

Upon a Star" and "The Mickey Mouse Club March". At the barn, there's a button that can be pushed so guests can hear one of the songs.

A miniature model of the rig is displayed across the corridor in a small museum devoted to Walt Disney's love of horses. It also includes another authentic antique: a harness handmade by Disney Legend Owen Pope for Walt Disney World in 1970 that features the original WDW logo.

Pope, who was in charge of all of the horses at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World, made it at his home on the Pony Farm backstage at Disneyland. He made all the original harnesses for Walt Disney World's horses, which is why his window on the Car Barn on Main Street, U.S.A. at the Magic Kingdom reads "Owen Pope. Harness Maker."

## TORO STONE LANTERN: Disney's Polynesian Village Resort/Epcot

Emperor Hirohito of Japan was a huge Disney fan and for the opening of the Magic Kingdom in 1971, he personally presented Roy O. Disney with a Japanese Toro stone lantern to light the way to success and happiness.

A Toro is used to illuminate the grounds of Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, Japanese gardens and other locations that are steeped in tradition. For almost 10 years, the gift was on display, without any explanatory placard, at Disney's Polynesian Village Resort.

However, with the opening of Epcot's World Showcase with a Japan Pavilion (as well as the construction of Tokyo Disneyland only a year from completion), the stone lantern was moved to the Japan Pavilion, right opposite the structure at the entrance that was inspired by the eighth-century pagoda found at Horyuji Temple in Nara. The deer on the side of the lantern represents the famous Nara Deer Park adjacent to that shrine.

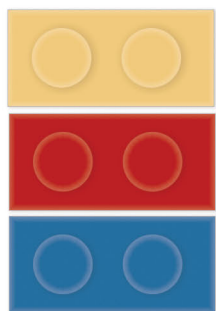
According to the Imagineers, the reason for no placard is that it would be telling the story of the Disney parks and not the story of Japan.



*These are just a few of the many examples of historical surprises that can be found and enjoyed at the Walt Disney World resorts by knowledgeable guests.*



# Chops of Fury *or* Shuriken Shuffle



*Which technique will you use in Legoland's new Ninjago World?*

By Seth Kubersky



Legoland's famous Master Builders crafted this imposing "stone" dragon, which stands guard at the entrance to Ninjago: The Ride.



**A** new world has recently risen in the realm of Central Florida theme parks. It's a world of powerful warriors, a world of ancient mystical weapons, a world of mysterious enemies ... and a world of plastic bricks! Lego's top-selling Ninjago toy sets, which spawned the hit Cartoon Network television series and an upcoming major motion picture, have now come to life in a new themed land at Legoland Florida, offering guests of all ages this thrilling challenge: do you have what it takes to 'Become the Ninja'?

Ninjago World at Legoland Florida welcomed its first guests on Jan. 12 in a confetti-covered ceremony featuring stars from

the Netflix show *Fuller House*, and a high-kicking team of young martial artists from an Orlando dojo. An iconic red Asian archway marks the entrance to this new expansion, which is tucked behind Land of Adventure's Coastersaurus tracks. Visitors seeking the secrets of Spinjitzu will discover an array of hands-on training activities lining the exotically landscaped pathway that leads to the land's central temple. Those climbing walls, reaction games and spinning playground platforms are all designed to help budding ninjas sharpen their physical and mental prowess in preparation for Ninjago World's ultimate test: a cutting-edge 3D dark ride that lets riders fight alongside Kai, Master Wu, and all their

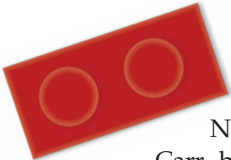
favorite heroes against Lord Garmadon's evil armies, using interactive technology never before seen in a theme park ride.

Legoland Florida, which opened in 2011 atop Winter Haven's former Cypress Gardens, has been steadily growing its offerings over the past few years, and project director Keith Carr is in charge of executing that expansion. A graduate of University of Florida, Carr worked in construction as a general contractor for 17 years before joining Merlin Entertainment three years ago, quickly rising to oversee not only Legoland Florida, but all of its parent com-



Original "Fuller House" star Jodie Sweetin and her "Fuller House" castmates Michael Campion, Soni Nicole Bringas, Ashley Liao, Elias Harger and McKenna Grace, joined Kai, the red ninja, to officially open the new Ninjago attraction on Jan. 12.





pany's resorts in North America.

Carr began working with Merlin during construction of Legoland Florida's first hotel, built Heartlake City and Burger Kitchen, and is currently readying Legoland's Beach Retreat for its summer opening. While Carr admits he and his collaborators at Merlin's Magic Making department "sit back in the shadows compared to our counterparts" at Disney Imagineering and Universal Creative, they are gaining recognition for bringing design innovations to life with a fraction of the time and resources their better-known colleagues enjoy.



The new Ninjago attractions are a prime example of Merlin's development process, which Carr said began with a simple question: "We want the kids to become the ninja. How do we accomplish that?" The logical solution was a signature high-capacity dark ride, which would be Legoland's answer to Disney's Toy Story Mania. "I was first introduced to Ninjago through my children," Carr recalled, "so I already understood the personalities of the characters and how to bring that to life ... their inner strengths and weaknesses."

Ninjago's core concepts provided Carr's team with "fun and flexibility for immersion in an engaging theme," but Merlin had to partner with the interactive attraction pioneers at Triotech to fulfill its

promise. The original idea was to use a "point and click apparatus", like the guns used in earlier shooting rides, but "we wanted to push the boundaries ... we wanted to be innovative and push the envelope." That led Carr and his team to wonder, "Why not be able to use our hands to simulate martial arts moves?"

In response, Triotech developed a wireless motion tracking system that combines sensor bars embedded in each ride vehicle's lap bar, with hidden cameras arrayed around the track, to capture guests' hand gestures and translate them into fireballs and lightning bolts that fly towards enemies on multiple massive 3D screens. Five different suggested moves – including the "Chops of Fury" and "Shuriken Shuffle" –



PHOTO BY LEGOLAND FLORIDA

Ninjago riders fling, flick and flap their hands above a lapbar-mounted sensor to send fireballs flying at on-screen enemies inside Legoland's innovative take on an interactive indoor attraction.

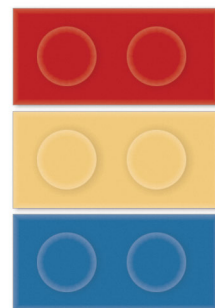


are demonstrated as guests make their way through the queue, and players can refine their own fighting techniques for higher scores. "We want it to be challenging, because it's all about repeatability", said Carr, advising that "it does take a couple of times until you find the sweet spot." For competitive players, Carr recommends adopting the "Cobra" technique by resting your elbow and flicking your fingers across the sensor beam.

Another advanced element of the Ninjago ride is its use of Triotech's Illusio projection mapping technology to extend the interactivity off the screens and onto real set pieces. You may not notice it with all the skeletons and spells spinning around you, but certain physical objects between the flat



Ninjago can bring out the competitive spirit in budding ninjas of all ages, as our reporter discovered when he came in second place to this wee warrior.



projection surfaces also visibly react to your strikes. "We're all accustomed to these big 3D screens," Carr explained, "but we wanted more depth. Being able to interact with [the scenery] is just the next level." Carr said those easily overlooked objects, like beehives and boxes, are "some of my favorite things in terms of Easter Eggs," and often net big bonus points.

Once the technology behind Ninjago was in place, the attraction was first installed at Legoland parks in Billund, Denmark and Carlsbad, Calif. before coming to Florida. In fact, Carr "designed the dark ride building for the Florida location if we decided to

build it there, but we didn't know we were going to put it there until about 18 months out [from opening]." While all versions of the ride are identical, apart from some behind-the-scenes operational improvements, Ninjago World received the most refined surroundings in Florida, where it's located "off the beaten path", along a winding cul-de-sac that uses "Asian-themed landscaping as a buffer to create that escapism into the land."

Now that Legoland Florida's Ninjago World is open to guests, Carr called it "a step up for a Legoland park attraction, no doubt." From the interactive outdoor activities, through the immersive indoor attraction, down to the gift shop and character

meet and greets with Kai and Nya, Carr said surveys show that "guests just love it ... it's really done well." So you may want to start studying up on your martial arts moves now, because Legoland's world of Ninjago can always use another brave warrior.



PHOTO BY JACKIE ROSEBOOM



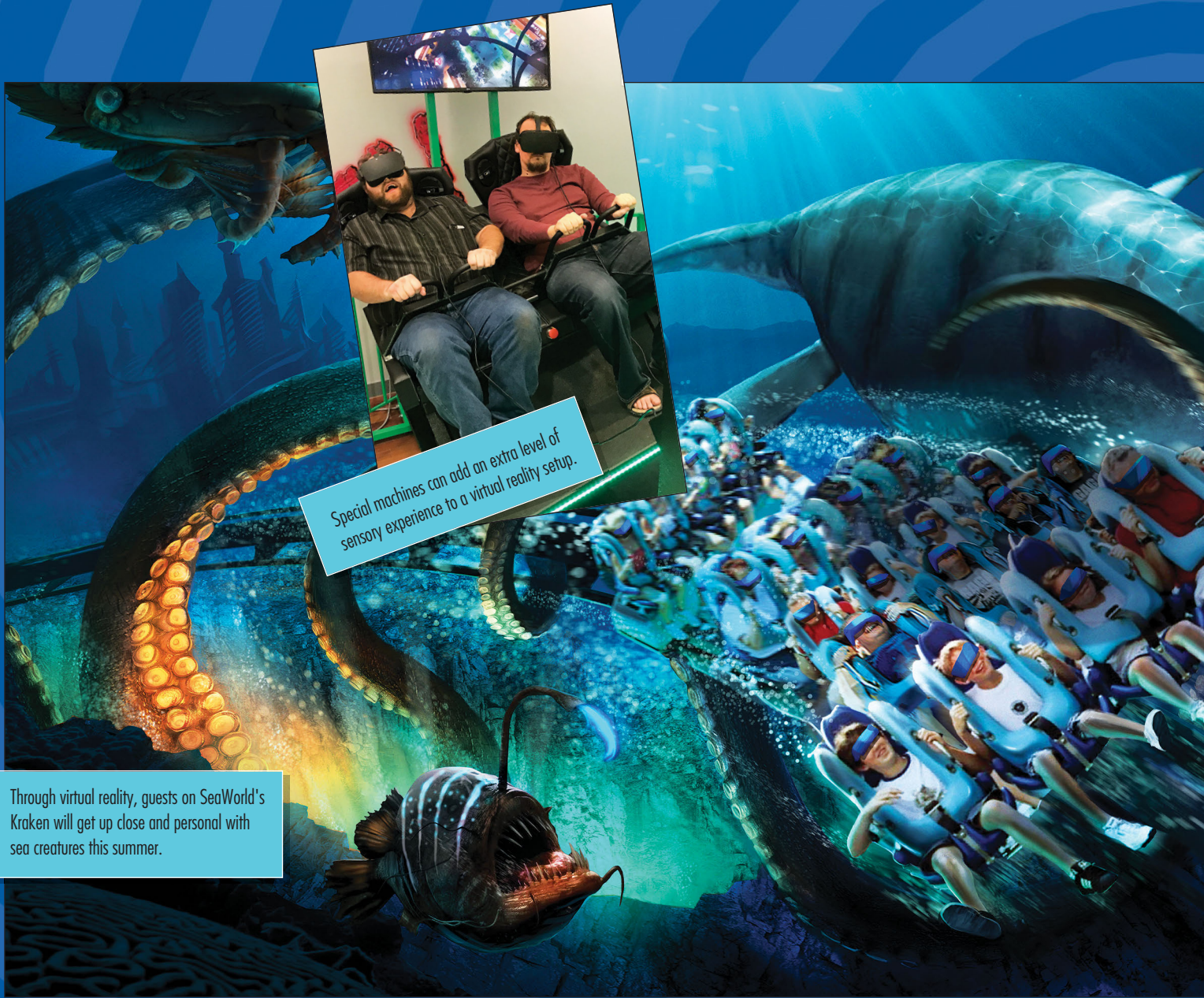
Before boarding the ride, sharpen your reflexes by slapping lighted buttons in this interactive - and surprisingly exhausting - reaction time test.



Project director Keith Carr displays a Lego model of the new Ninjago land in the leadup to its opening.



# VIRTUAL REALITY



Through virtual reality, guests on SeaWorld's Kraken will get up close and personal with sea creatures this summer.



# in a Themed World

By Andy Haynes



Guests look around at a world only they can see through virtual reality on Fun Spot's Freedom Flyer roller coaster.



Escaping reality by entering a world of fantasy and wonder has been the purpose of theme parks since their inception. Now with advances in virtual reality, attractions are able to take the idea of escaping to a whole new level!

With virtual reality, designers and artists are able to create a full 3D digital world that can be interacted with, typically through the use of special equipment such as 3D headsets and controllers. This means a guest can don the virtual reality gear and instantly find themselves soaring over the Grand Canyon, fighting dragons or racing spaceships. In virtual reality, there's no

limit, except the designer's imagination, to the worlds that can be created and explored.

For a long time, the technology required for virtual reality was very expensive. This meant that, for most people, the only places to experience virtual reality were dedicated facilities and larger attractions. But now, as the price of the technology continues to drop, more and more people are able to purchase their own virtual reality systems and try it out in their very own homes. Of course, if someone can experience virtual reality without leaving their house, why would they ever go to an attraction? This question has caused companies to rethink





On "Ride The Comix" at DisneyQuest, players fought off villains on all sides of their spaceship.



In virtual reality, the world doesn't have to follow the laws of physics and can twist and turn through space and time, like this VR game at Main Event Entertainment.

how they can utilize virtual reality to provide experiences that consumers can't recreate in their own homes, and it's led to some incredible innovations that are revolutionizing the industry.

### Early VR Attractions

In its early days, the full capabilities of virtual reality were still largely unexplored. Many programs and experiences were little

more than tech demos trying to understand what the technology could do. All of that changed with the creation DisneyQuest. First opened in 1998 at Downtown Disney (Disney Springs), DisneyQuest combined everyday arcade games with larger than life interactive attractions that could only come from Disney. And of course, there was virtual reality. The virtual reality attractions included "Ride The Comix",

where players took up positions around a spaceship to fight off comic book villains with a virtual energy sword, and Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride, which let guests mount a flying carpet and race through a virtual Agrabah to save the Genie. These attractions were not only popular with guests, but also served as a testing ground for what virtual reality could accomplish in themed entertainment and how it could function in a high-capacity and fast-turnaround environment. By incorporating large components, such as the magic carpet device and the spaceship, Disney began to answer the question of how to create unique experiences with virtual reality that could not be done at home.

While ultimately DisneyQuest failed to remain popular enough to avoid closure (closing July 3), the lessons learned and the technologies developed through its creation have had a far-reaching impact on the industry today. As virtual reality technology advanced and the prices for the equipment went down, more and more smaller companies began exploring new applications for use in attractions. Today, there are brand new virtual reality experiences opening up every day, allowing guests opportunities to interact with virtual worlds in all new ways.

### Present Day VR Attractions

One such unique experience is V Play Reality at Main Event Entertainment at Pointe Orlando on International Drive. Developed by Zero Latency, V Play Reality is the first free-roam multi-player virtual reality system in America. Setting players loose in a large open room, V Play Reality uses wireless motion tracking systems to identify player locations and place them in the virtual environment. This means that to move through the virtual world, the player has to actually move around the physical environment. Combining the virtual environment the player is seeing and hearing through their headset, with the physical world the player is walking around in, represents a whole new level of immersion unavailable at home.

The idea of combining virtual environments with the physical world is also being explored by some of the larger theme parks.



A company called VR Coaster has patented a way to combine a virtual reality experience with a full-scale physical roller coaster. By syncing the video and sounds in the headset with the movement of the coaster, riders can feel the ride's actual airtime and g-forces, all while experiencing a simulated world. Fun Spot America in Orlando was one of the first parks to have a virtual roller coaster when they added the technology to their attraction, The Freedom Flyer. Now the technology is present on roller coasters in Six Flags brand theme parks across America and other parks around the world. SeaWorld also recently announced a virtual reality upgrade to their Kraken roller coaster this summer that will feature a similar technology they are developing in-house.

As virtual reality becomes more popular, entire attractions are opening up that are dedicated to the many different ways VR can be used. At Virtual Adventures in The Florida Mall, guests can try out several different types of virtual reality experiences packed with hundreds of different scenarios. These experiences combine virtual reality headsets with different machines that let you simulate driving a race car, flying a spaceship and more. Each machine offers a unique type of experience that ranges from swinging and bouncing to spinning and twisting. By having all of these virtual reality systems in one location, Virtual Adventures allows guests to experience many different kinds of virtual reality without having to drive all over town.

Another exciting use of virtual reality in a leading theme park was seen this past year at Universal Orlando's Halloween Horror Nights. Through a special, reservation only experience called The Repository, Universal combined elements of virtual reality, haunted houses and escape rooms into a highly immersive and interactive event. The Repository, which was offered at a nominal upcharge over the park admission, allowed small groups of guests the chance to interact with performers, solve puzzles and strap on a virtual reality headset to participate in an experience as of yet unseen in a major theme park. Universal answered the question of how to make virtual reality special in a theme park setting by coupling it with physical actors, environments and interactive puzzles.



Haunted attractions, like this one at Universal Orlando's Halloween Horror Nights, can provide a whole new level of terror by using virtual reality to fully immerse guests.

### The Future of VR

Looking forward, the trend toward more and more integration between the virtual world and the physical world seems to be the future of virtual reality in theme parks. One way companies are looking to further this combination is through the use of what is known as augmented reality. Instead of fully replacing the real world, augmented reality takes the real world and enhances, or augments it by overlaying videos and images. One example is the recent Pokémon Go craze which uses augmented reality to allow Pokémon to appear in the real world when viewed through the user's phone. But augmented reality doesn't just have to be used for entertainment. It can also be used to enhance a guest's experience by providing helpful information and useful resources in real time just by being in the right place or looking at a relevant object or image.

One such exciting piece of augmented reality technology is being developed right now that could revolutionize the way hearing-impaired guests experience

attractions. "A major problem with closed captioning on rides," said Joe Fox, senior project engineer at Birket Engineering, "is that it's only available on video segments or through devices that can be cumbersome and distracting." Through a partnership with Alcorn McBride, Birket Engineering is developing an augmented reality system that uses a special pair of glasses which contain tiny projectors that project images only the person wearing the glasses can see. "Using sensors that tell the glasses exactly where they are on a ride, we can feed the closed captioning directly to the wearer," said Fox, "letting them read what's being said while looking anywhere. And without distracting the other riders." This technology is currently being prototyped for just a few attractions, but once it's in place, the possibilities for how it can be used are endless. "Imagine virtual tours that trigger when you approach significant areas, wait times that are displayed just by looking at an attraction," continued Fox, "We could even gamify the entire park itself!"



By Susan and Simon Veness

# Homecomin'

## The Art of Southern Cuisine At Disney Springs

**G**ood food has to come with a good story to make a mark in Walt Disney World, and Chef Art Smith's Homecomin' at Disney Springs definitely ticks the box in both categories.

But then it's hard to imagine any creation of Florida's effusive celebrity chef

not succeeding these days, as he is so dedicated to every aspect of all of his ventures, from Chicago to Washington, and now in the heart of Disney, where he started his working life in their College Program 30 years ago.

Homecomin' is a perfect fit for Disney Springs, with its "old Florida" vibe, as

the new restaurant trades on Smith's passion for traditional Southern cuisine. Its rustic appearance is the first sign this is not a standard dining experience, and that theme continues throughout, a classic merger of food with story.

Much of the décor is collected from historic sources. The wood on the



The restaurant opened as Homecoming, but they recently decided to drop the "g" to reflect Chef Art Smith's homespun vernacular. The exterior mixes both a rustic look with old-time Florida, using repurposed wood and other materials, including lots of cypress.



straightaways of the bar and the railings on the porch are reclaimed Florida red eucalyptus, while rounds on the bar top are hardwood masterpieces of Florida camphor, sliced from the same tree from nearby Clarcona that yielded the large 10-top tables. The restaurant's beams are clad with cypress and all the millwork was done by local company, Viable Lumber.

The main light fixtures sport original burlap potato sacks, repurposed as lampshades. The interior also features eye-catching murals by a Tampa artist, as well as more cypress in the panels and cabinetry, ensuring an authentic background once you pick up the menu and grab one of the signature Moonshine cocktails.

So how did all this Sunshine State magnificence get started? We asked the man himself, and he regaled us with his life story – and more besides.

"I am a native Floridian," Smith



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA

The man himself spends a lot of time at Homecomin', ensuring his inimitable style is maintained throughout the restaurant.



PHOTO BY THARIN WHITE

For the interior décor, Homecomin' features some eye-catching murals by a local artist, with classic Floridian images, as well as a wealth of clever reclaimed details in the woodwork and even the lighting fixtures, notably with the original burlap potato sacks (marked "Russet") around the two big circular light fixtures in the main restaurant area.





The food tastes as good as it looks, with plenty of that authentic Art Smith style. The (gluten-free) Church Lady Deviled Eggs, left, are one of the must-try appetizers, while Smith's Fabulous Fried Chicken, complete with creamy mashed potatoes and a cheddar drop biscuit, is pure Southern decadence, with all the flavor.

explained. "My family's lived in Northern Florida for over 100 years and I am sixth generation. I'd been living in Chicago and was Oprah Winfrey's chef for many years, but I have moved back, hence the Homecoming. I also worked as a cast member at Central Foods where I baked, as I love baking, so I have 'come home' to Disney, too. I also cooked for Michael Eisner when they opened the Disney Studios."

Smith's glittering culinary career has taken him around the world, and he has cooked for heads of state as well as celebrities like Oprah and Lady Gaga. After writing one of his cookbooks – which was published by a Disney company – he was invited to showcase his skills at the Epcot International Food and Wine Festival.

Then another Disney opportunity crossed his path. "One day I was cooking in Oprah's kitchen and a man walked in with her. She said, 'Art, you know Bob Iger don't you?' And I thought 'The Big Mouse!' Then, after one of the festivals I did, about five years ago, I said to Oprah's secretary, 'Can you give me Bob Iger's e-mail?'"

"And I wrote to him, and said, 'Mr Iger, I just want you to know, I was a

Disney cast member, I think you might remember I cooked for you at Oprah's, and you published my book, but you know what? I think you need more family experiences, and I think a great Southern restaurant with a Florida theme would do really well.' And he answered me!

"It was kind of ballsy, but I did it – no agent, no lawyer. I just told him I could see a need for it, and it would do well. The assumption is people who come to Disney save for years and come here on a budget, but equally, there are now people who stay at the Four Seasons, and they come here with their children, too, hence there is a great diversity, and I want to cater to that diversity."

When it comes to the menu, Smith is adamant everything has to have Floridian authenticity, hence some dishes – such as his mother's chicken and dumplings and his grandmother's chocolate cake – are genuine family favorites, while others are also regional specialties, like the succulent Fried Green Tomatoes, super-crispy Fried Chicken and his gourmet version of hush puppies (with lip-smacking pimento cheese and jalapeno jelly).

We sampled a wide range of

Homecomin's sophisticated presentation of good ol' Southern cookin', and can attest to every bit of Smith's devotion to his culinary roots. Dishes like Thigh High Chicken Biscuits, Deviled Eggs and Fried Catfish all came across with a freshness and pop on the palate that will surely surprise anyone who has had their fill of grits, collards and barbecue.

The Hamilton, Smith's lunch-counter style two-patty burger is a minor work of art, while his Jasper Board – a selection of pimento cheese, smoked sausage, shaved ham, home-made buttermilk crackers, bread and butter pickles and candied pecans – is a taste sensation guaranteed to have even the most jaded tastebuds saying 'Howdy!'

If all that sounds tempting, don't forget dessert, because this is another Smith specialty. "Our cake here is the bomb," he insisted. "It tastes like grandma used to make. It's our Hummingbird Cake, a banana-pineapple cake, with a cream cheese icing. I started making it for Oprah. She asked me to make it for Dr. Maya Angelou's 75th birthday and it made it famous. I've since made it for a lot of birthdays. Once you cook for one famous person, you cook for many, because they know you won't poison them!"





PHOTO BY THARIN WHITE

Not ready to go for the full sit-down restaurant option? Try the rustic patio porch bar instead with its tempting array of signature drinks - notably The Muleshine.

Homecomin's other feature is the Shine Bar, and it also has a family connection. "My great-grandfather was a moonshiner," Smith said. "Up there in the northern Florida moonshine belt, he made moonshine. They don't mix it, they just drink it! But my partners at Splitsville came up with the cocktails. I told them I have a bourbon bar in Atlanta, and it's very popular, and a branded bar does better than any other bar, so I thought, why not have a Moonshine Bar?"

Our tip? Try the Muleshine cocktail (White Lightning, peach purée, fresh lime juice, and a splash of ginger beer) or be really adventurous and order a Moonshine Flight – three house-made moonshine varieties, with a spiced pickle juice chaser and candied pecans. Wow!

Among the artwork is a classic photo of Smith from his days in the Disney College Program in 1982.

As a final question for this most genial of hosts, we asked what he would like people to take away with them. "I think maybe something they probably didn't realize was here, in that it captures a taste of Florida they weren't aware of, that Florida is a southern state – and no-one ever thinks that!"



PHOTO BY VENESS TRAVEL MEDIA



PHOTO BY THARIN WHITE

## CHEF ART SMITH'S HOMECOMIN'

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Location:</b>   | Disney Springs   |
| <b>Price Range</b> |  |
| <b>Appetizers:</b> | \$10 to \$15   |
| <b>Entrees:</b>    | \$15 to \$32   |
| <b>Desserts:</b>   | \$8 to \$10  |
| <b>Phone:</b>      | 407-939-4277   |
| <b>Website:</b>    | homecomingkitchen.com  |
| <b>Hours:</b>      | Sunday through Thursday:<br>11 a.m. to 11 p.m.;<br>Friday and Saturday,<br>11 a.m. to midnight |

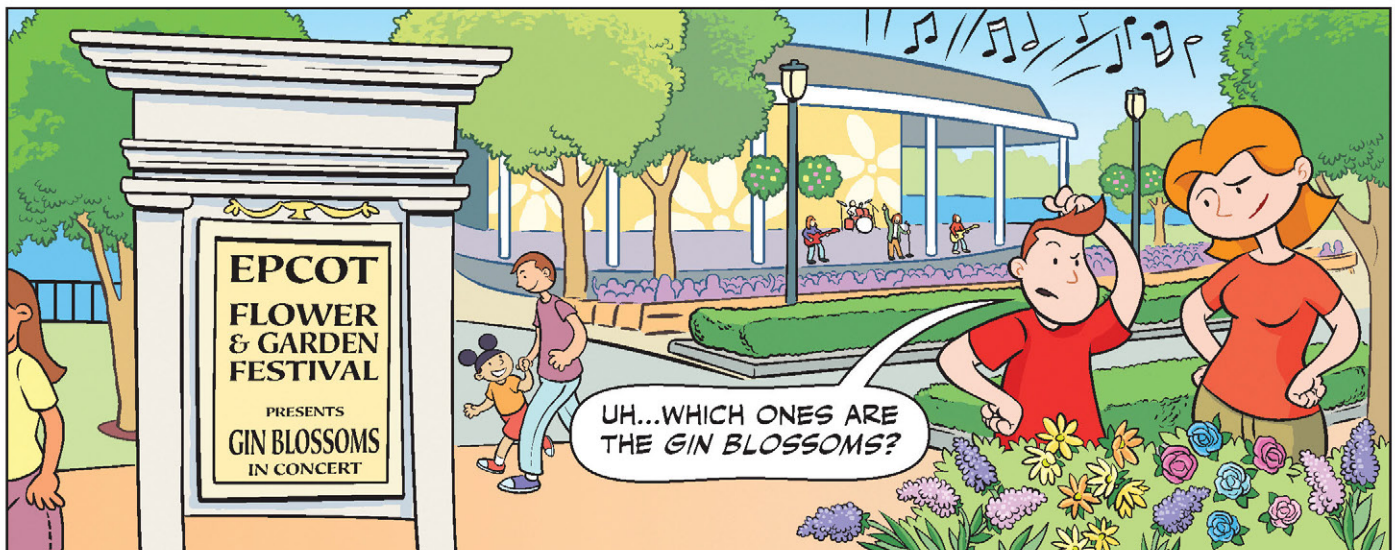
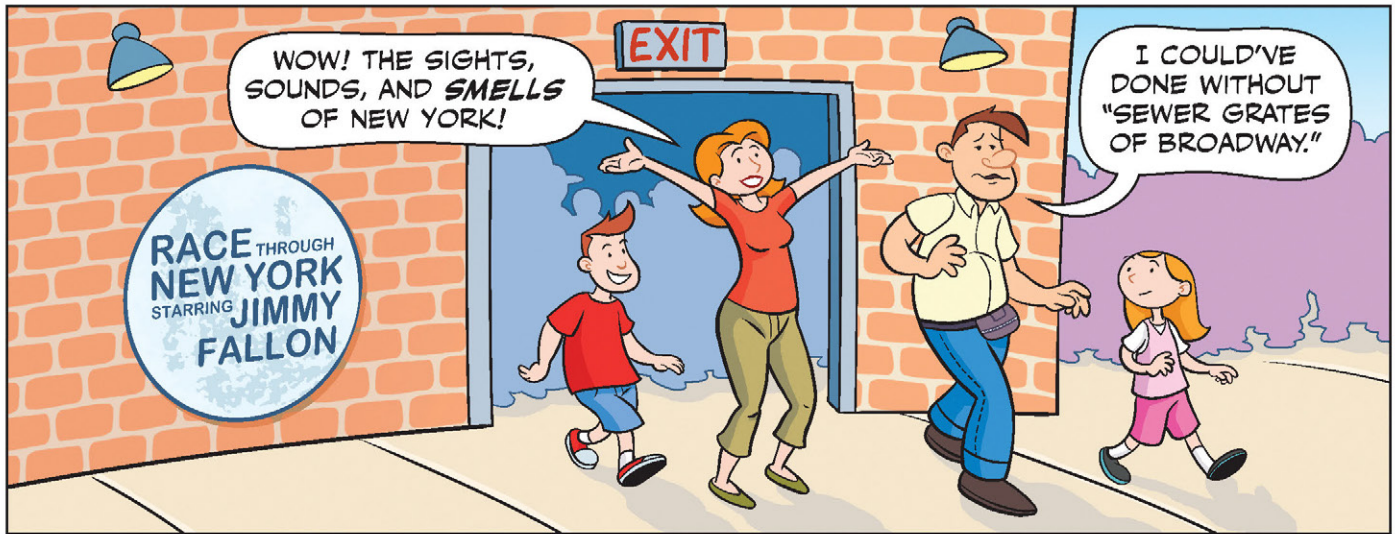
They are on the Disney Dining Plan and accept Tables in Wonderland.





# AMUSEMENT PARK

By Vince Dorse, Created by Pat N. Lewis & John Green







## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 10 differences in these two photos?

Although this clown was all smiles, it was bittersweet to attend the last Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus performance in Orlando this past January. Feld Entertainment, the parent company of the circus show, announced they are ending the shows forever this May.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



1. There is an additional button on the clown's jacket. 2. The fingers on the clown's left hand glove are longer. 3. There is a white circle missing from her headband. 4. The clown's earring has changed from white to dark pink. 5. Her left eye now has two eyelashes. 6. Her hair has grown to shoulder length. 7. There is a black-outlined design missing from her left jacket lapel. 8. The clown is now wearing a gold bracelet on her left arm. 9. Her left eyebrow is larger. 10. There are now two gems next to the clown's left eye.





# THE RUMOR QUEUE

By Fowl Owlerson

**H**ello, Attractions readers! Welcome to another edition of "The Rumor Queue"! It's spring time, which means intermittent rain and sauna-like weather for yours truly in Orlando! Hurray! Space is precious, so let's get into the latest rumors in the theme park industry.



## Universal Orlando Resort

The Secret Life of Pets attraction is rumored to be on hold, possibly cancelled. Rumors suggest Toon Lagoon may be retrofitted with DreamWorks properties. Super Nintendo World has taken precedence and a proper announcement of the opening date is rumored for this summer, with construction commencing by the end of the year in Woody Woodpecker's KidZone. A Mario Kart augmented reality experience and a Donkey Kong mine cart coaster are rumored, with Princess Peach's castle as the nexus of the expansion.

Revenge of the Mummy is rumored to be getting an extensive refurbishment

and rebranding by the end of the year. Perhaps we'll hear more after Race through New York with Jimmy Fallon officially opens. I've heard new footage will be shot, featuring the "The Mummy" (2017) with new set pieces to reflect the continuity of the remake and future movies.

## Walt Disney World Resort

A Wreck-It Ralph virtual reality attraction in Tomorrowland and a Guardians of the Galaxy attraction at Epcot are rumored to be announced this summer with construction to commence shortly thereafter. Wreck-It Ralph is rumored to replace Stitch's Great Escape and Guardians of the Galaxy is rumored to replace Universe of Energy.

I've heard rumors that once the Avatar expansion is opened in Animal Kingdom, an emphasis will be placed on adding attractions to Epcot. In addition to Guardians of the Galaxy, a "My Neighbor Totoro" experience is rumored for the Japan pavilion and a Ratatouille ride is rumored for France. Pixar's "Coco" is

rumored to be added to the Mexico pavilion, while "Inside Out" is rumored either for the former location of Cranium Command or Imagination!

## SeaWorld Orlando and Busch Gardens Tampa

A new attraction is rumored in the Sea Garden space of SeaWorld. Rumors suggest it'll either be a new modest coaster (think Cobra's Curse) or a water ride. Meanwhile, Busch Gardens is due for a new attraction and the long-rumored Gwazi replacement is said to be it. I've heard it compared to Cheetah Hunt in intensity and it'll, of course, be themed after an animal (land animal, not sea or flight), complete with exhibits and educational aspects.

### DISCLAIMER

*The thoughts expressed here are not purported as fact and should be viewed as hearsay until officially confirmed or denied by the companies mentioned.*

Have a rumor, comment, or question? Send them our way at [info@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:info@attractionsmagazine.com). You can also strike up a conversation with yours truly on Twitter @fowlowlerson.



## MYSTERY PHOTO

### WIN A PRIZE!

Tell us at which Disney resort you can find this oversized playing card. To enter, e-mail your answer, along with your name and mailing address to [mystery@attractionsmagazine.com](mailto:mystery@attractionsmagazine.com).

**Hint:** The card features one of the characters in Disney's "The Princess and the Frog".



### LAST ISSUE'S MYSTERY PHOTO ANSWER

Congratulations to Brittney Wallace from Grantham, N.H. She recognized these items as being seen in The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney's Hollywood Studios.





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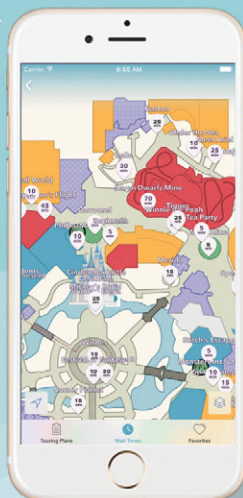
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# OUT OF THE LOOP

Attractions News from Outside the Orlando Area

By Andy Guinigundo



## Main Street Electrical Parade Returns .....

**Disneyland, Anaheim, Calif.** – The Main Street Electrical Parade completed its run in Florida in 2016 and has made its way back west. This parade debuted at Disneyland in 1972. Its twinkling lights, massive floats and unique “Baroque Hoedown” synthesizer soundtrack have captured the imagination of generations of park goers on both coasts, and even around the world. The parade last appeared in Disneyland park in 1996, and at Disney California Adventure from 2001 to 2010. At that time, the parade made its way to Walt Disney World where it replaced the SpectroMagic parade. With its return to Disneyland’s Main Street, the original opening float with the giant bass drum with the words “Main Street Electrical Parade” on the sides in lights has returned, after having been absent when it was in Disney California Adventure. For now, Disneyland has scheduled performances nightly through June 18, and has declared it a “limited time engagement”.

## Morey’s Piers Refurbishing .....

**Great Nor’Easter Coaster**  
**Morey’s Piers, Wildwood, N.J.** – Having thrilled millions since its debut in 1995, Morey’s Piers’ inverted looping Great Nor’Easter Coaster is getting a major overhaul. The Vekoma steel coaster utilizes a chain-lift to 115 feet high

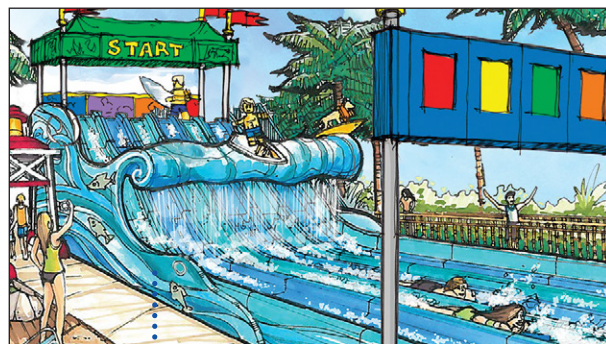
with a maximum speed of 55 mph with five inversions, at a length of 2,170 feet. Of that, a whopping 1,820 feet will be replaced! There will be 62 pieces of track replaced, weighing in at 4,000 to 6,000 pounds each. How does one move track like this? Well, using a 280-foot-tall, 250-ton crane, of course! The coaster has

undergone other refurbishments, having been repainted in 2006, and the trains were changed to “Freedom Seats” in 2008. This refurbishment will not only provide new track, but reportedly smoother runs. The construction commenced in September and is expected to be completed in the spring, possibly to open by May at a cost of \$5 million.

## Legoland California Resort Additions .....

**Legoland California Resort, Carlsbad, Calif.** – Guests to the Legoland California Resort will be able to take advantage of some new additions this

year. Starting “small”, six additional scenes are being added to the Star Wars Miniland model display. These scenes cover the first 30 minutes of Star Wars: The Force Awakens. This summer, Surfer’s Bay will be added to the Legoland Water Park. This area will include a junior mat water slide raceway with six lanes. It will also include a “spray” ground with spraying water





jets and plenty of splashing and Lego models. Finally, guests will be able to sleep in Ninjago-themed rooms. There will be 18 of these rooms and two suites. These will replace the castle-themed rooms at the Legoland Hotel. If you love castles more than ninjas, an entire castle-themed hotel is planned for 2018, including 250 rooms, a restaurant and a themed pool area.

#### ••• Bellewaerde Building Dueling Alpine Coasters

**Bellewaerde, Hooze, Belgium** – Dawson Duel is the recently-revealed name of the dueling alpine coasters in Belgium. The name is a nod to the Canadian City of Dawson in the Yukon that serves as the halfway point in the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race. This will be the first dueling alpine coaster construction in Europe, as well as the first to be built on a non-natural hillside. Riders will climb more than 80 feet high, then sit in individual coaster cars and race down two parallel side-by-side twisting and turning tracks. The attraction's more than \$4 million investment represents one of the park's largest since 1999. The attraction is scheduled to open this spring. Can't get to Belgium this summer? "Alpine" or "Mountain" style coasters are quite prevalent in the United States, seemingly wherever there are natural hills and mountains. For example, the

Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge, Tenn. area boasts four!



#### ••• SeaWorld San Diego to Open Ocean Explorer

**SeaWorld, San Diego, Calif.** – As part of their continued effort to stress the importance of aquatic conservation, SeaWorld will open the Ocean Explorer attraction this summer. The attraction will combine multiple aquariums, exciting rides and

digital technology, in hopes of sparking inspiration in guests, leading to ocean conservation awareness. The signature ride of the attraction is a mini-sub. Riders become researchers, collecting data and learning how to help sea animals. Guests will additionally be able to see creatures not previously on display at the park. These include giant octopuses, large spider crabs and moray eels. The animals will be set up in "research pods", where

information will be imparted interactively. A wave swinger ride will also be located in the area where guests swing through thousands of bubbles. Three additional family rides will round out the attractions in the area. The entire area covers three acres.

#### ••••• Holiday World Restoring Classic Calypso Ride

**Holiday World, Santa Claus, Ind.** – Only a few calypso rides are still in operation in the United States. The spinning, tilting classic ride has delighted park goers for decades. One will be added to the ranks



when Holiday World opens Firecracker this spring. This particular classic calypso lived regionally for over four decades. It was first installed at LeSourdsville Lake, north of Cincinnati, from 1972 until 2002, when that park closed for good. It was later relocated to Fun Spot in Northeast Indiana where it resided from 2008 to 2016. That park, too, permanently closed. Holiday World in Santa Claus, Ind. then purchased it. They have been diligently restoring it to its full glory with plans to open this spring. As the name implies, the ride will be installed in the 4th of July section of the park. The cars will be painted red or blue to complete the theming.







## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ATTRACTION!



### Disney D23 Expo Anaheim Convention Center

**T**his “Beast” is from a galaxy far, far away. This cosplay mix-up of Chewbacca from Star Wars and the Beast from “Beauty and the Beast” (with C-3PO Lumière) was worn by a fan at the 2015 Disney D23 Expo. The D23 Expo returns to the Anaheim Convention Center, just down the street from Disneyland, this July 14 to 16. We’ll be there to cover all the fun.



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